

**Bond University**

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **Cross cultural characteristics and training of Australian project managers and working in the United Arab Emirates**

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**CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING  
OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS  
WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

Presented by

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Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

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*“Four things support the world: the learning of the wise, the justice of the great, the prayers of the good, and the valour of the brave”.*

Muhammad a.s.

## Thesis Abstract

In the last 30 years the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has welcomed many foreign companies into the Kingdom to conduct business. Many international companies realised that there was a huge potential for growth in the rich Middle Eastern market and major international companies, such as *Pepsi* and *Starbucks*, have established themselves in this market by setting up their regional headquarters in Dubai.

In addition to the potential for growth in this new expanding market, these international companies want their brand names to be recognised and affiliated with a positive image, in a market associated with growth, richness and affluence. However, what these companies do not realise is that if the expatriates they send to their overseas assignments are not appropriately trained and prepared, the expatriates are more likely to experience difficulties that can have a serious impact on their activities and lead to possible failure.

A major issue is that expatriates lacking appropriate cross-cultural training and preparation will not be able to adapt to a new country and working environment. In addition, this lack of acclimatisation to the new setting becomes not only detrimental to the individual, but also very costly to the company. In many cases, it can damage the company's reputation and can undermine the future of the company in the host country and, as a result of this; those companies could potentially lose hundreds of thousands of dollars. Another potential problem for expatriates are differences in interpersonal behaviour. Since there is a cultural difference between Australia (a Western society) and the UAE (a Middle Eastern society) it is very easy for misunderstandings to occur. Hence, it is easy for the behaviour of an expatriate to be unintentionally offensive. For instance, certain behaviours that are accepted in Australia, for example shaking hands when introduced to a person of the opposite gender, are unacceptable in the UAE. With the proper and up-to-date cross-cultural training, this is one of the many problems that could be avoided.

The literature review led the author to believe that there is a lack of cross-cultural training provided to Australian expatriates who are working or are about to commence work in the UAE. To investigate this, the author designed an online survey, which was distributed to human resources managers and project managers already working in the

UAE. A survey of 100 Australian project managers based in the UAE was then undertaken to discover the dimensions of the cultural business environment for these employees and how and/or if those employees have been cross-culturally prepared for their overseas assignment.

Once the online survey was analysed, it indicated that there was a lack of cross-cultural training provided to those expatriates. To gain a better picture as to why this was the case and to find out what could be done to fix the problem, and therefore help expatriates and their companies, the survey was followed by six case studies of senior management in large companies involved in project management, construction and property in the UAE.

All six case studies are based on Australian companies that have spread internationally, including to the UAE. The reason for this was that this research focused on Australian project managers working and living in the UAE.

Once all the information from the case studies was collected and analysed, the case studies revealed that although the UAE has a large expatriate population, (80 per cent of the population of the UAE is expatriates); most expatriates live in segregated communities. The majority of expatriates tend to live and spend time with people with a similar language and culture. In addition, the case study results confirmed the survey: Australian expatriates were lacking cross-cultural training. Most did not receive any cross-cultural training and those that got some form of preparation claimed that it was not adequate. More importantly, the case studies enabled the author to make recommendations on what type of cross-cultural training should be offered, how it should be delivered and when it should be delivered to the expatriates for the best effect.

**Keywords:**

United Arab Emirates, Expatriates, Project managers, Training and Preparation

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis comprises my own original work and that the materials in this thesis constitute work carried out by me unless otherwise stated.

Any materials used in this thesis that are not my own have been acknowledged in the text.

The materials from this thesis have been published in refereed journals and conferences, in some cases as they are with no changes made to the work.

Additionally, this thesis (in the condition as it is, with no changes made to it) has been given to all the case study participants, who wished for a copy of it.

The thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, references and appendices.

This thesis complies with the stipulations set out for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy by Bond University.

---

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I have put a bit of “heart and soul” into this research. Therefore, I hope that you will enjoy this work as well as find it immensely educational and useful.

Lastly, I offer my regards and blessings to all of my colleagues, friends and everyone who supported me during the completion of my thesis.

## **Publications**

The following papers have been published in refereed journals and conferences during the three years that the research was conducted.

### **Refereed Journals**

- Cerimagic, S. (2010) “Islamic Business Law” *Education Business and Society; Contemporary Middle Eastern Issue* 3(1):40-47.
- Cerimagic, S. (2010) “Influence of Culture on Project Practices - Insights from Australian Project Managers in UAE” *Education Business and Society; Contemporary Middle Eastern Issue* 3(4):277-288.
- Cerimagic, S. (2011) “Cross-cultural adaptivity and expatriate performance in the United Arab Emirates” *Education Business and Society; Contemporary Middle Eastern Issue* 4(4):303-312.
- Cerimagic, S. (2011) “Pre-departure and Post arrival cross-cultural Training for Australian project managers working in the UAE” *Education Business and Society; Contemporary Middle Eastern Issue*, under review.

### **Refereed Conferences**

- Cerimagic, S. (2010) “Cross cultural project management characteristics between Australia and the United Arab Emirates”, COBRA Conference, Doctoral Student Session, 2<sup>nd</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> September 2010, Paris.
- Cerimagic, S. (2011) “Do Australian project managers working in the UAE need cross-cultural training?” AUBEA Conference, 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> April 2011, Bond University, Gold Coast Australia.
- Cerimagic, S. (2011) “Ethics in Project Management”, Third International Conference on Climate Change: Impacts and Responses Conference, 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> July 2011, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil.



- Cerimagic, S. and Smith, J. (2011) “Project managers: the importance of cross-cultural preparation”, ARCOM Conference, 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> September 2011, Bristol, UK.
- Cerimagic, S. and Smith, J. (2011) “Screening and Selecting Project Managers for the Middle East”, COBRA Conference, 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> of September 2011, Manchester, UK.
- Cerimagic, S. and Smith, J. (2011) “Cross-cultural Training: The Importance of Investing in People”, COBRA Conference, 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> of September 2011, Manchester, UK.

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## CHAPTER ONE

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### 1 Introduction to the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is made up of seven Emirates. These are Abu Dhabi (*Abu Zaby*), high-profile Dubai (*Dubayy*) and five other Emirates: ‘Ajman, Al Fujayrah, Ash Shariqah (*Sharjah*), Ra’s al Khaymah and Umm al Qaywayn (*Quwayn*) (Rehman, 2008). On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 1971, the United Arab Emirates gained independence from the United Kingdom (UK). In the same year, six out of the seven states, Abu Zaby, ‘Ajman, Al Fujayrah, Ash Shariqah, Dubayy, and Umm al Qaywayn, merged to form the United Arab Emirates (UAE). They were joined in 1972 by Ra’s al Khaymah. The capital city of the UEA is Abu Dhabi.

The UAE’s per capita GDP is equal to those of leading West nations (The World Factbook 2010). Since the late 1990s, Dubai and, to a degree, the UAE have emerged as the strongly preferred location for multinational head offices in the Gulf region. Anticipating a post-oil era, the UAE is diversifying its economy through major industrialisation and development and has increased trade with some of the biggest global economies in the world. Through its economic reforms and strategic development of core industries, the UAE has become a beacon of change and is a trendsetter for the region (Rehman, 2008). In several ways, the UAE is the region’s most admired economy, both internally and globally.

Dubai occupies a large part of the Emirates and drives its wealth mainly from the Jebel Ali Free Trade Zone, advanced service businesses and tourism (Walsh, 2008). As stated earlier, the Emirate of Dubai has emerged as the preferred location for multinationals’ regional offices. This preference is due to in Dubai’s strong infrastructure, dynamic business culture and accommodating lifestyle for expatriates. Major multinationals like *Pepsi* and *Starbucks* have set up their regional headquarters in Dubai, often with the offices located in other Middle Easter regions reporting to the Dubai office (Rehman, 2008).



## 1.1 Background

At no other point in time have so many different people and cultures come into contact with one another. This is due to globalisation, the Internet and more specifically to the UAE, which has opened its doors to foreign investors and in a free market. Due to this new international closeness, domestic and global businesses face many cultural challenges and advantages. A more closely integrated global economy, increased migration and new demands for employing the best talent without limitations of country or region have all helped create a truly diverse workplace in the UAE.

If managed well, diversity can become a valuable advantage. It increases understanding about different markets, helps trigger creativity and may lead to better decision-making. However, if managed poorly, it can lead to unnecessary misunderstanding, conflict, confusion and inefficiency (Hofstede, 2001).

In 2008, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) economy was booming and the opportunities to do business in the country appeared to be limitless, encouraging international corporations to establish themselves in this growing market. Due to this, the UAE labour force has become one of the most culturally diverse in the world (The World Factbook 2010). Effective project management depends on good communication, understanding and mutual respect, so understanding the cultural dimensions of projects has become increasingly important, especially in the UAE.

Since the discovery of oil in the 1970s, the United Arab Emirates has undergone a profound transformation from an impoverished region of small desert principalities to a modern state with a high standard of living. To avoid dependence on oil and gas, the UAE government has increased spending on job creation and infrastructure expansion and is opening up its utilities to greater private sector involvement. The UAE has been largely successful in its efforts at economic diversification, although about 30 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) is still directly based on oil and gas output and the economy fluctuates with the prices of those commodities (The World Factbook 2010).

The UAE has a GDP of approximately US\$186.8 billion (The World Factbook 2009). The capital and the second largest Emirate, Abu Dhabi, accounts for one quarter of the total GDP of the UAE and is the centre for commerce, transportation, tourism and

finance (The World Factbook 2010). Abu Dhabi has taken a lead in trade by establishing relationships with international corporations and governments and developing a pro-business environment, allowing many Western firms to enter the region with few restrictions and government controls (The World Factbook 2010). Dubai had also achieved impressive levels of growth and development from 2000 until the 2008 global financial crisis hit, with an average GDP growth of 13 per cent (Hijazi, Zoubeidi, Abdalla, Al-Waqfi and Harb, 2008).

Cultural intelligence and cultural awareness are extremely important traits to possess when doing business abroad, and this is incredibly important when it comes to dealing with the United Arab Emirates. For this reason, Arabic culture, values, norms, local customs and standards of behaviour both social and business should be studied extensively to avoid offending the locals (Goleman, 1995). However, cross-cultural training and preparation will be the specific focus of this research.

## **1.2 Statement of the Research Problem**

The massive infrastructure and building works expansion in the United Arab Emirates region in the last decade (1998-2008) resulted in the recruitment of many expatriate project professionals in various capacities. The UAE has a different culture, social and business etiquette, religion and language to that of Australia. As pointed out earlier, there has also been a rapid expansion of international businesses operating in the UAE, with many Western corporations extending their operations to the Middle East. Consequently, some problems can arise because many expatriate managers cannot adjust to a foreign environment and hence are unable to function at their full potential, which can lead to poor performance or even the failure of many projects. To date there is no one definition that constitutes expatriate 'failure'. Some examples of what is currently considered expatriate failure would be if an expatriate is returned home prematurely or if they continued to stay in the host country but damaged business relationships and or delayed productivity (Bennet, et. al., 2000).

For the purposes of this thesis, failure is defined as: the expatriate returning home prematurely; the expatriate still staying in the UAE but failing to meet objectives; taking

longer than usual to get things done; not completing projects; contract cancellation; gaining a bad reputation for the organisation, and business bankruptcy.

Interestingly, the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK®) does not define what a successful project is. For the purposes of this thesis, a successful project will be defined as a project that delivers its objectives (time, cost and quality) to the satisfaction of the customer.

Since the researcher is not studying whether expatriates succeed or fail, those two terms can be used more casually and no future operational definition is needed (Chau, 2011).

Hofstede and Hofstede (2004) and Waxin (2000, 2004) have studied what effects country of origin has on cross-cultural adjustment and both studies came to the conclusion that cultural distance has a moderate effect on the cross-cultural training required. Research has recognised that the more different an expatriate's country of origin is to their new host country, the more difficult the adjustment that needs to be made.

The aim of this thesis is to discover whether Australian (and other) project managers in the UAE are appropriately prepared and cross-culturally trained for their overseas assignment and whether that cross-cultural training is helpful to their success in working in the UAE.

### **1.3 Title of Thesis**

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*Cross-cultural characteristics and training of Australian project managers working in the United Arab Emirates*

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### **1.4 Motivation and Significance of Research**

This thesis will look at cross-cultural project management, using Australian expatriate project managers in the UAE as a basis for comparing the different project management cultures and how to get those working together. *“Throughout history, people from different countries and different walks of life have traded and made productive deals while pursuing their own very different goals”* (Hofstede, et. al., 2002:786). Working cross-culturally can be a source of experience and innovative thinking that can enhance

the competitive position of organisations. However, cultural differences can interfere with the successful completion of projects in today's multicultural global business community (Darlington, 1996). To achieve project goals and avoid cultural misunderstandings, project managers should be culturally sensitive and be able to promote creativity and motivation through flexible leadership (Gibson, 1997).

### **1.5 Statement of Significance**

From an empirical point of view, this thesis could potentially assist human resource professionals in global organisations to plan and implement more appropriate cross-cultural training courses for Australian expatriates who are working in the UAE. In addition, the findings of this thesis could help organisations understand how to help their expatriate project managers to succeed. As a consequence, this will assist the organisation in saving thousands of dollars as well as the project manager's reputation. This research has the potential to help the companies and the project manager build stronger relationships with overseas clients and local businesses in the UAE as well as government officials.

According to Birdseye and Hills (1995), expatriates have to deal with unfamiliar environments that in many cases have very different political, cultural and economic conditions. This means that Australian project managers working and living in the UAE will be facing both personal and job-related differences and other problems. It is up to the organisations to prepare their project managers adequately by providing their expatriates with training that gives them the skills and knowledge to deal with these potential problems.

Given the high costs linked with poor overseas performance and failure, organisations need to ensure that the expatriates they choose to send on overseas assignments are appropriately trained. Sending the right people can lead to successful overseas experiences (Birdseye et. al., 1995). However, without suitable international human resource management practices, Australian project managers will find it hard to completely realise all the potential advantages a country such as the UAE has to offer. At the time of the publication of this thesis there are no specific studies in Australia that deal with expatriate problems in the UAE. This needs to change if Australian project

managers want to be more successful in the UAE. Consequently, this thesis will attempt to gain a better understanding of how project managers can be better supported on their overseas assignments and what type of cross-cultural training they require.

## **1.6 Contribution to Knowledge**

There has been a rapid expansion of international businesses operating in the UAE, with a lot of Western corporations expanding to the Middle East. According to the CIA Fact Book 2010, about 80 per cent of the UAE population are expatriates. This indicates that the majority of corporations still find it necessary to send parent country nationals to live and work in the UAE. Studies completed by researchers such as Punnet (1997) illustrate that global mobility is a reality of the business environment.

The UAE is a jumping off point for businesses such as *LG*, *Google*, *Starbucks* and many other companies with household names that wish to access the 3.5 billion people in Asia and the Middle East. Good expatriate project managers become very important to those companies, they liaise well between the parent company and the UAE as well as, they have skills which enable them to lead international teams. However, expatriate turnover in the UAE is much higher than equivalent domestic turnover. Organisations can have a very serious problem, because many expatriate managers cannot adjust to a foreign environment and hence, are more likely to fail.

According to Fishman (1996), understanding the factors that improve expatriate performance in international environments has become a vital human resource issue. However, as Shaffer et. al., (1998) pointed out, that most extant research has been planned, developed and conducted in the U.S. from a local perspective, studying U.S. expatriates who are preparing for overseas assignments. This type of locally based research is almost non-existent in Australia, with hardly any research relating to Australian expatriates who are posted to the UAE. For this reason, it is necessary to include corporations from different nations and to develop nation-specific and appropriate studies. Consequently, this study attempts to explore the factors affecting satisfactory cross-cultural project management between Australia and the UAE.

According to Hofstede (2003), when it comes to working in a foreign country with a different culture to our own, such as the UAE, one needs to follow the rules of the culture one is working with rather than the rules of one's own culture.

### **1.7 Aims and Objectives**

The aims and objectives outlined in this chapter will guide the reader through the various stages of this research.

---

#### **AIM**

*The aim of this research is to provide a conceptual model to discover if the success of the expatriate project managers is greatly influenced by the cross-cultural preparation of the expatriates for their overseas assignment. This aim will be tested through the analysis and findings part of this thesis.*

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The researcher would like to discover if Australian project managers in the UAE are appropriately prepared and cross-cultural trained for their overseas assignments. Furthermore, the researcher wishes to find out if cross-cultural training is helpful to the success of the project managers. In addition, the researcher will review companies that do not train their project managers and consider if that lack of preparation is one of the reasons why the project managers cannot achieve their full potential.

Additionally, this research seeks to better understand the perception and management environment in the UAE and compare it to an Australian (Western) business environment. In particular, the researcher would like to find out if companies prepare their employees for overseas assignments and for specific projects. If the companies do prepare their employees the researcher would like to find out how it is done.

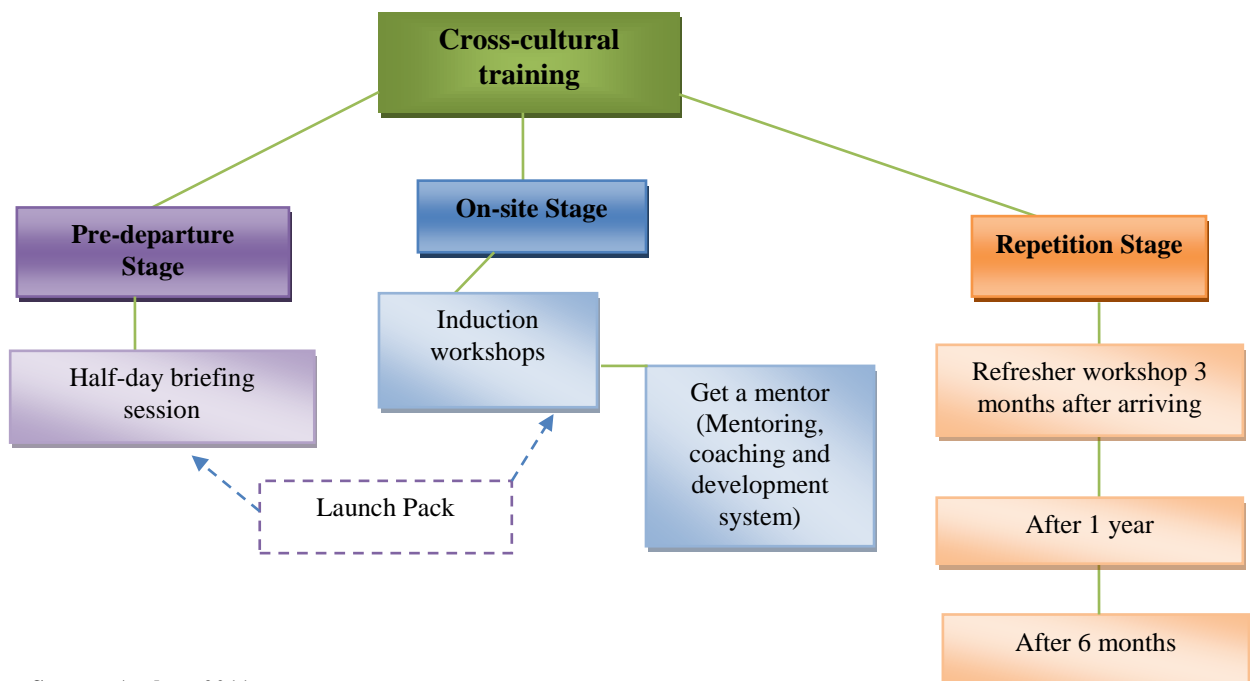
Similarly, if the companies do not prepare their staff for overseas assignments it is important to know the reasons for not carrying out this important process and what effect it has on the performance of the managers and the projects they were involved in.

## 1.8 Objectives

- Conduct an extensive literature review on cross-cultural issues to be aware of the problems.
- Using surveys and interviews to establish whether Australian project managers working in the UAE are cross-culturally trained for their overseas assignments.
- Analyse existing conditions and training methods in order to establish what needs to be improved.
- Establish what type of cross-cultural training Australian expatriates currently receive and whether that training is specific or generic.
- Provide recommendations on how to improve the cross-cultural training.

## 1.9 The Proposal

**Figure 1.1** Cross-cultural Training Blueprint



Source: Author, 2011

A proposal is shown in Figure 1.1 for a cross-cultural training blueprint that provides a conceptual model which will be tested through the analysis and findings part of this

thesis. This highlighted proposal will be matched closely with the aim and the objectives.

### **1.10 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is structured into seven chapters as indicated in Figure 1.2, which provides a concept map for this thesis.

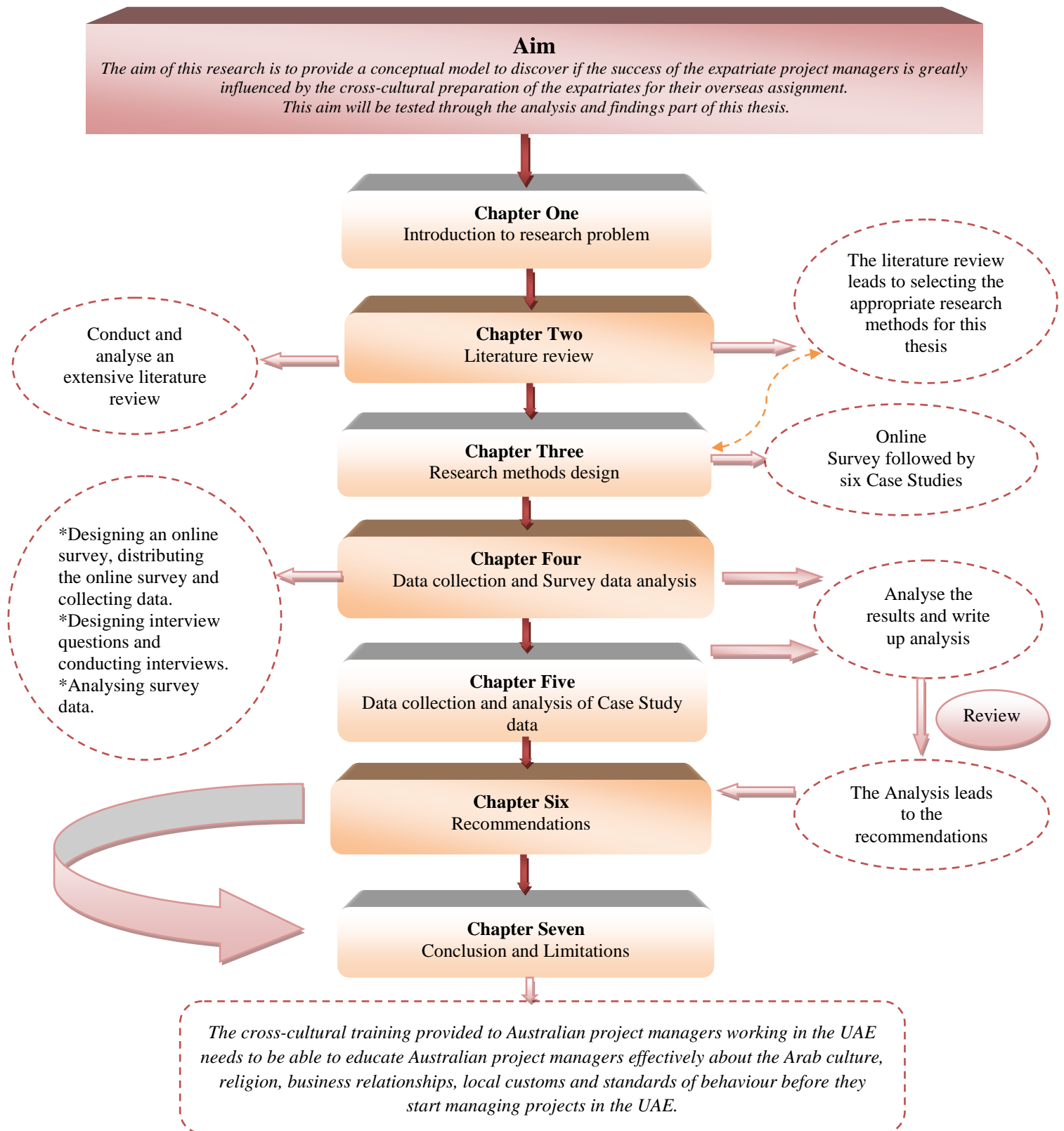
Chapter One will introduce the reader to the research problem and will lead into the literature review. Chapter Two will conduct and analyse an extensive literature review on cross-cultural issues. Chapter Three will investigate in detail both quantitative and qualitative methods and decide on the most appropriate research method approach for this thesis. This research has made use of both quantitative and qualitative methods and Chapter Three will offer an explanation why the researcher started the research by conducting online surveys first, followed by six in-depth case studies. Chapter Four will deal with data collection of the online surveys and in this chapter the researcher will discuss the survey data analysis results. Chapter Five will analyse the case study data. The analyses from Chapters Four and Five will lead to Chapter Six, which will outline all the recommendations made by the researcher. Chapter Seven will deal with the limitations of the research and will also conclude the research.

Figure 1.2 outlines the structure of the thesis and it explains in graphic form step-by-step the composition of the thesis.



# CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

**Figure 1.2**      **Structure of the Thesis**



Source: Author, 2011

### 1.11 Literature Review Summary on Cross-cultural Training

Cross-cultural training is an important concept in this research and it requires a detailed literature review in order to place it in the context of a project management environment. Luthans et. al., (2009:492) defined training as the “*process of altering employee behaviour and attitudes in a way that increases the probability of goal attainment*”. Researchers such as Blino and Feldman (2000) believe that the preparation of personnel by providing cross-cultural training is extremely beneficial because it ensures that their full potential can be tapped. Cross-cultural training can help expatriates to better understand the culture, customs, and work ethics of their host country. Hickins (1998) believes that cross-cultural training alone cannot help; the ‘right people’ also need to be selected. The term ‘right people’ refers to individuals who have grown up in diverse cultures, who have open and flexible minds, who will be able to deal with high degrees of stress and who are willing to learn. People who have these characteristics are the most suitable type of employees that should be selected for overseas assignments (Hickins, 1998).

Solomon (1994) conducted a review of 228 multinational companies (MNC). Her findings indicate that those companies need well-designed cross-cultural training programs for expatriates that are administered both before and after the individuals leave their home country, if they want their expatriates to succeed overseas. The topics that are usually covered in cultural training programs are customs, history, economics, politics, business and social etiquette. However, this type of training is insufficient on its own, as all countries have distinctive business practices and specific cultural situations. The cross-cultural training undertaken is generic rather than specific and cross-cultural training needs to be more specific (Luthans et. al., 2009).

According to Adler (2001), cultural differences are too important in international business to be ignored or denied. Learning about different cultures by facilitating and diffusing cultural synergies is considered critical to economic success by researchers such as Adler and Bartholomew (1992). Forster (2000) believes that pre-departure cross-cultural training can help expatriates to adapt to living and working conditions in their host country. However, researchers such as Brewster, (1995); Selmer, (2000) and Waxin, (2000, 2004), all point out that the cross-cultural training which is provided by

most companies is usually insufficient, incomplete or simply non-existent. Briody and Chrisman (1991), Mendenhall and Stahl (2000) and Selmer (2001) researched an alternative to pre-departure training by providing training in the host country. This, however, does not mean that pre-departure training is not necessary. As Black et. al., (1992) point out, pre-departure training is indispensable. However, it would be more effective if it were to continue in the host country.

According to Shumsky (1992), the reason companies do not provide cross-cultural training to expatriates is because often the people who decide if cross-cultural training should be undertaken often do not have international experience and believe that this type of training is a useless experience rather than the necessity that it is. In addition, Cerdin (1996) found that if the companies do not provide cross-cultural training, most expatriates will not attempt to train themselves.

Chapter Two will examine the literature review concerning culture, the UAE, project management and leadership and cross-cultural training programs as all of these subjects are relevant to this thesis.

### **1.12 Methodology Summary**

Australia was chosen to represent a Western culture and the UAE have been selected to represent the non-Western culture.

This thesis will use both a quantitative as well as a qualitative approach. When these two approaches are combined, it is called the 'mixed-methods' approach. Using two types of data-collecting approaches to conduct the data collection diminishes the individual limitations of each of the research methods.

First, an online survey was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Once the surveys was completed, the data collected was analysed and the results provided the researcher with areas that need to be further researched in more depth. This in-depth research was achieved by conducting six case studies.

Chapter Three will provide more detail about both quantitative and qualitative research methods and it also will offer explanations as to why an online survey was used and why it was then followed by six case studies.

### 1.12.1 Assumptions and Limitations

The research has several limitations, some of which may influence the findings. Firstly, this research is only targeting Australian expatriates working and living in the UAE. Secondly, the data collected from the survey was extensive and very informative. However, this form of data-collection can be limiting in the sense that by using an online survey it was not possible to ask the participants any follow-up questions about their responses. The survey was carried out anonymously, so it was impossible to know which individual made which response in order to ask any specific follow-up questions. For this reason, it was decided that in-depth case studies had to be conducted in order to ask additional questions.

Thirdly, case studies allow researchers to “*retain the holistic and meaningful characteristic of real-life events*”, such as group behaviour, organisational and managerial processes, to name a few of the factors to be investigated (Yin, 2009:4). However, even with surveys and case studies the respondents and interviewees may not capture all the subtleties and nuances required to produce an all-embracing solution.

### 1.13 Summary

A large number of Western businesses have extended their operations to the UAE. As a result, problems can arise if the many expatriate managers cannot adjust to a foreign environment which has a great cultural difference. For this reason, many projects are likely to fail. However, adequate expatriate preparation can reduce or even prevent expatriate failure. Cross-cultural training is designed to assist expatriates enhance their knowledge and skills relevant to their new position and host country, which in turn can help the expatriate conduct business in an unfamiliar host country and therefore be more productive.

Research indicates that one of the main contributing factors to the inability of expatriates to perform well overseas and to adjust to the UAE environment is not a lack of technical competence, but cross-cultural incompetence. As this research will demonstrate, appreciation of cross-cultural factors can be readily and easily improved by sound, well-organised cross-cultural training.

## CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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There are a vast number of reasons why cross-cultural training is important. From a company prospective, if their employees are adequately trained for the overseas assignment they will be more successful, thus increasing the overall efficiency and profitability. The company will then avoid losses, both of money and reputation (Smith, 1992) and in the process, the company can overcome the belief that their way of doing things is superior to that of others (Ono, 1992), thus leading to improvement. Chapter Two will now study the literature extensively on all the topics which are related to this thesis.

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## CHAPTER TWO

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### 2 Literature Review

This literature review analyses the project managers in the UAE in seven sections:

- The United Arab Emirates (UAE)
- Culture in general
- The Arab culture and religion
- Project management
- Leadership
- Work ethics in the UAE
- Cross-cultural training

Business in the UAE is heavily influenced by the Arab culture and religion. Arabic culture is distinct in that Islam affects every aspect of life, including social, law and business criteria. Islam is not only a religion; it is a way of life. This is an important factor Westerners need to understand and respect when they are working in an Islamic country such as the UAE.

The literature review will begin by closely examining the United Arab Emirates, and then it will cover all the seven sections outlined above.

## 2.1 Introduction to the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is 83,600 sq km and is made up of seven territories called the Emirates. The capital city of each Emirate follows the name of the Emirate itself (Benesh, 2004). The UAE developed almost overnight from a scarcely populated desert region to an international business hub (Benesh, 2004).

Figure 2.1 Map of the UAE



Source: The XYZ Digital Map Company (2010)

The country is located on the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula and it lies along the Persian Gulf (Walsh, 2008). The seven Emirates are: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Sharjah, Ras al-Kheimah, and Umm al-Qaywayan (Walsh, 2008). According to Barraut (1993), the written history of the Emirates started with their conversion to Islam in 632AD. The people of Arabia always lived in tribes, and with the arrival of Islam a structure of tribal social life came about, and it remained largely unchanged until the discovery of oil in the 1980s.

The UAE has become a beacon of change and a trendsetter for the region through its economic reforms and strategic development of core industries. The UAE is diversifying its economy through major industrialisation and development, preparing for a post-oil era and hence, it has developed some of the biggest free trade zones in the world. Since the late 1990s, Dubai and to some extent, other cities in the UAE, have emerged as the strongly preferred location for multinational head offices in the Gulf



region. The UAE is, in several ways, the region's most admired economy, both internally and globally.

According to the *United Arab Emirates Business Intelligence Report* (2009), on a per capita basis the UAE is the wealthiest state in the Middle East, with the highest standard of living in the Middle East. This is as a result of Abu Dhabi's oil wealth, combined with Dubai's strong tourism, manufacturing, and financial services sectors. Such wealth has permitted the country to defy the forces of democratisation and the social problems experienced by a number of its neighbours, and are a possible explanation as to why 80 per cent of the population living in the UAE is made up of expatriates (CIA Fact Book, 2010). According to Hofstede (1991:786) throughout our history, *"people from different countries and different walks of life have traded and made productive deals while pursuing their own very different goals"*. Expatriates are workers who live and work outside their own country. In the past almost all of this group were men, but over the last decade that has changed and women now have joined the expatriate work force (Stroh and Caligiuri, 2000).

Abu Dhabi, the capital of the UAE, is the largest and the richest of the seven Emirates. In 2010, the UAE had a population of 5, 148,664 (CIA Fact Book, 2011). Abu Dhabi is the largest Emirate with the country's largest population, with approximately 40 per cent of the total UAE population living in Abu Dhabi (Benesh, 2004). It has been estimated that Abu Dhabi owns 90 per cent of the UAE's oil and natural gas resources, which accounts for about 9.6 per cent of the world's total oil reserves; this places the UAE in the fifth position for total oil reserves (Benesh, 2004). However, Abu Dhabi just like the rest of the Emirates is trying to diversify its economic sectors (Rehman, 2008). It is also important to note that this Emirate is one of the most socially conservative of the seven Emirates (Walsh, 2008).

Ajman, on the other hand, is the smallest of the federation of Emirates. Ajman has been expanding its agriculture and tourism industry (Benesh, 2004). This small Emirate is almost entirely urbanised, but Ajman, like Dubai and Sharjah, is becoming a megacity (Walsh, 2008).

Dubai occupies a large part of the Emirates and derives its wealth mainly from Jebel Ali Free Trade Zone, with advanced service businesses and tourism (Walsh, 2008). Within



the region, Dubai is the preferred location for multinationals' regional offices. This preference is rooted in Dubai's strong infrastructure, dynamic business culture and accommodating lifestyle for expatriates. Major multinationals such as *Future Art Broadcast Trading* and *Mirvac* have set up their regional headquarters in Dubai, often with their other Middle East locations reporting to their Dubai office (Rehman, 2008).

Fujairah is separated from the other Emirates by the northern part of the Hajar Mountains of Oman and it is almost completely mountainous. Its economy is limited to rock-crushing, which is supplemented by state subsidies (Walsh, 2008). Its primary industries are agriculture, fishing and boat-building. Fujeirah has a port set up largely as a holding station for sheep and cattle for the entire Arabian Peninsula (Benesh, 2004). Fujeirah has virtually no oil, but it is attracting a lot of tourists, mainly from the other Emirates, and it is very likely to market itself as the UAE's health retreat. Universities from other Emirates have been relocated to Fujeirah (Benesh, 2004).

Sharjah has early settlements that are 5,000 years old and it is known for its beautiful masterpieces of Arabic architecture, its souks and its fascinating mix of old and new buildings and architecture (Walsh, 2008). This Emirate has both oil and gas and is connected by sophisticated highways to Dubai and Ras al-Kheimah (Benesh, 2004).

Ras al-Kheimah has been ruled by Sharjah for most of its history (Walsh, 2008). This Emirate also embraces tourism. In addition to a tourist trade, it has a free trade zone and it is also very ambitiously investing in its infrastructure (Benesh, 2004).

Umm al-Qaywayan was part of Sharjah (Walsh, 2008). Today, this Emirate focuses mainly on fishing, boat-building and pearl-diving. To date, no oil has been found in Umm al-Qaywayan (Benesh, 2004).

According to Rehman (2008), tapping into the UAE requires strategies based on genuine understanding of the region. Rehman (2008) goes on to say that the strategy needs to be comprehensive and must be kept current, as the region is changing dramatically.

### **2.1.1 The Arab Culture and Religion**

According to Schneider and DeMeyer (1991), many studies have shown management practices, leadership styles (Dorfman and Howell, 1988 and Puffer, 1993) and human resource management (Luthans, 1995) vary with different national cultures. This indicates that workplace performance is affected by the differences between management practices and national culture.

Human diversity is the most complex yet interesting aspect of understanding different societies. Hence, one needs to learn about different societies and be considered when trying to understand them. Every human being is characterised by a discrete cultural identity that distinguishes them from others within their society. Likewise, each group of people is characterised by a discrete cultural identity that distinguishes them from other groups and cultures.

The differences in these identities and cultures consist of many factors, which may include religious beliefs, psychological and behavioural morals, costumes, language, literary arts and so on. An example of this is that when one hears the word ‘Arab’, one has a preconceived notion, portrayal or association of a person, religion and place that is often based on how that person, place and religion have been portrayed in the media. Additionally, an Arab has traditionally been considered as someone who lives in one of the Arab nations or the Middle East and who is a Muslim (Retso, 2003). Nevertheless, there are other aspects to an individual beyond the sole basis of physical appearance or place of origin. These are embedded in behavioural, cultural, historical and religious considerations.

### **2.1.2 Culture**

Culture, by definition, is relative and it varies depending on the area of study (for example, the definition of ‘culture’ is different in business management and social sciences). There is a widespread understanding among cultural scholars that providing a conclusive and general definition of culture is impossible and may lead to controversy (Cowan, 2006).

However, historically, culture was derived from the Latin word *cultura*, which stems from *colere* and means ‘to cultivate’ (Macquarie Dictionary, 2010). This origin of the

word is the most common one used by researchers and authors. The Macquarie dictionary defines culture as depicting anything that is relevant to human knowledge, belief and behaviour, including shared attitudes, values, goals and practices performed by people in a specified place and time that transcend generations.

The culture of an individual is dependent on the region and society where the individual grows up, as well as other factors that influence and affect daily life. Each individual's experiences are different and they all contribute into a definition of 'culture'. Hence, a culture cannot be summarised and limited into one single characterisation, because its meaning is diverse and different for each individual, society and area of application.

In reference to Arabic culture, the word 'Arab' itself is the foundational basis of defining the Arab culture as it carries the basic attributes of that society. According to Retso (2003:105), early written sources describe 'Arab' *"as a term for groups of people in the Middle East"* who practice Islam as a religion.

Although a culture is made up of individuals who are different, culture influences behaviour and provides explanations on how a group of people with the same cultural background communicate and filter information. Culture develops more slowly the larger the group of people (Murphie and Potts, 2003).

The cultural meanings of such fundamentals of culture depict some forms of activity normal and accepted, while others are eccentric or wrong, for example, shaking hands with a person of the opposite gender. Culture is relative, unique to a group of people and understanding and being aware of different cultures is important to avoid causing offence.

Kohls (1981), listed the differences between Western and non-Western cultures that can be used to clarify the impact of diverse value approaches on the motivation and training aspects of the management of international projects. Table 2.1 compares Western and non-Western values and their impact on project management.

**Table 2.1 Western and Non-Western Cultural Values**

Western Cultural Value	Non-Western Cultural Value	Impact on Project Management.
Individualism	Collectivism/Group	+
Achievement	Modesty	No impact
Equality/Egalitarianism	Hierarchy	–
Winning	Collaboration/Harmony	+
Guilt	Shame	No impact
Pride	Saving face	No impact
Respect for results	Respect for status/Ascription	+
Respect for competence	Respect for elders	–
Time is money	Time is life	–
Action/Doing	Being/Acceptance	–
Systematic/Mechanic	Humanistic	–
Tasks	Relationship/Loyalty	–
Informal	Formal	–
Directness/Assertiveness	Indirectness	–
Future/Change	Past/Tradition	–
Control	Fate	–
Specific/Linear	Holistic	+
Verbal	Non-verbal	+
(+) = Positive impact of combining both value outcomes	(-) = Negative impact of combining both value outcomes (culture clash)	

Source: Adapted from Kohls (1981); Marquardt and Kearsley (1999)

For example, Australians (from a Western society) believe that time is money and are very much task-orientated; hence, they have difficulties sometimes understanding their Arab (non-Western) managers when they hold meetings that last longer than seems necessary to achieve their purpose. What Australians fail to realise is that to the Arabs time is life, and so the goal of the meeting is not focused as much on money and achieving goals as it is about establishing relationships. If Australian project managers do not learn and try to understand the Arab culture there will be a culture clash and working together may be more difficult. The items in Table 2.1, which are recognised as having a negative impact on project management, clearly depict a clash of cultural values and symbolise areas in which conflicts may arise in project teams. Team members need to complete project tasks proficiently and make value judgments on

courses of action, based on information not appropriate in their own cultural environments.

National culture is specific to a particular national group and is embedded deeply into everyday life. Hofstede (1980:25) defines national culture as the “*collective programming or software of mind*”. Low and Leong (2000) state that people generally are reluctant to change their national culture. In his research, Hofstede (1980) found that managers from different countries who work in multinational companies have very substantial behavioural differences and attitudes towards employees. Additionally, Hofstede (1980) found that the national culture of an individual has more influence on the work-related values and attitudes of a person than the individual’s position within the company, their profession, gender or age. Hofstede’s (1991) world study revealed that 50 per cent of differences in employees’ attitudes and behaviour are due to national culture.

Hofstede (1980) surveyed *IBM* employees and he came up with five dimensions of culture. These dimensions are the following:

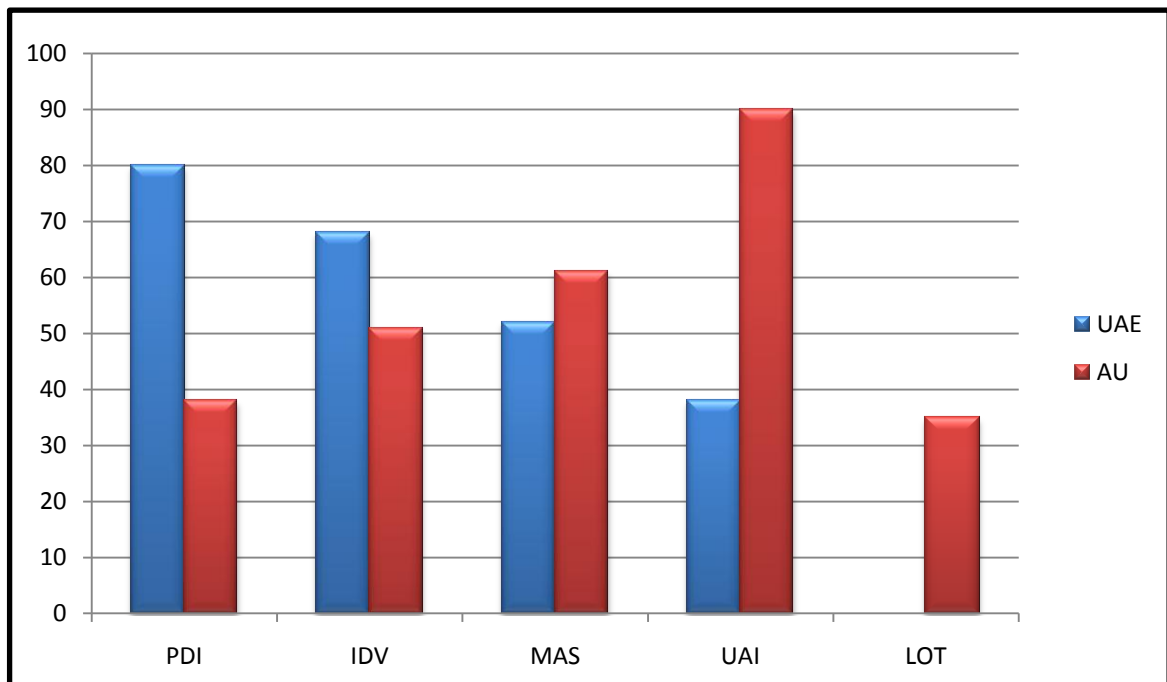
- 1 Power Distance Index (PDI)
  - 2 Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)
  - 3 Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS)
  - 4 Individualism vs. Collectivism Index (IDV)
  - 5 Long-Term Orientation (LTO).
- 
1. The Power Distance Index (PDI): “*is the degree to which power differences are accepted and sanctioned by a society*” (Hofstede and McRae, 2004: 52-88). This dimension relates to the concentration of authority, influence, power and equality within the culture. Hofstede scored the UAE as 80 out of 100 on power distance, thus indicating a need for a hierarchical management arrangement and the belief that everyone has a place in society. High power distance also indicates that individuals from that culture accept inequality in power among institutions, organisations as well as people. Hofstede (2008) scored Australia as 38 out of 100 for this dimension, which indicates that Australians expect equality in power. Low

power distance also means that individuals from this culture relate power distance to the degree of hierarchy or level of decision-making.

2. The Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) is the “degree to which a society is *willing to accept and deal with uncertainty*” (Hofstede and McRae, 2004: 52-88). This relates to the tolerance or acceptance level of ambiguity and risk within a society. Muslim ideals have developed over time with rules, laws and policies that reduce the uncertainty of society (Hofstede, 2007). The UAE scores 68 out of 100 on Hofstede’s index. Although this score is high on acceptance of uncertainty, it is changing as Western business floods into the country (Levinson, 1994). High uncertainty avoidance means that members of the society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and will try to avoid it. Hofstede (2007) gave Australia a score of 51 out of 100 for this particular dimension, which indicates that Australians overall have a higher uncertainty tolerance regarding the unstructured, the unknown, the unclear and the unpredictable than people from the UAE.
3. Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS): “*Masculinity is the degree to which traditional male values are important to society*” (Hofstede and McRae, 2004: 52-88). The Masculinity ranking has more to do with assertiveness than with gender. When motivating people from cultures that do not emphasise assertiveness, Hofstede recommends talking less about yourself and more about the other person in the conversation (Hofstede, 2006). This dimension relates to the separation of the masculinity and femininity, with masculinity defining achievement, aggressiveness and success-driven, task orientations and femininity standing for the emotional, affiliated, submissive and relationship-orientated. Hofstede (2009) rated the UAE as 52 out of 100, showing that due to the Islamic culture women are limited in influence and ‘saving face’ is of high importance. However, as the culture of the country is becoming more Westernised, women have begun to take leadership roles and may be highly educated (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede scored Australia 61 out of 100, which means that this particular society has a greater preference for heroism than the Emiratis, who prefer value relationships, group decision-making, co-operation and quality of life.

4. The Individualism vs. Collectivism Index (IDV) “*is the degree to which individual decision-making and action is accepted and encouraged by the society*” (Hofstede and McRae, 2004: 52-88). A high individualism ranking indicates that independence and individual achievement are important. A low score means that people are ‘collectivists’: they are expected to act as members of the group (Hofstede, 2009). Hofstede scored the UAE as 38 out of 100 on this scale, which indicates that the UAE is a collective society. In this society individuals look out for and after one another and the needs of society are of higher importance than the individual’s needs and wants. This indicates that the Emirates are a collectivist culture that has a ‘greater good’ mentality that focuses on long-term group commitment (Hofstede, 2007). High value is placed on family, honour and hospitality. On this dimension, Australia scored 90 out of 100. This was the second highest score for this dimension out of all countries rated by Hofstede, with the US receiving the highest score of 91. Australia is an individualistic society, where the individuals in this society concern themselves with their own needs, wants, goals, achievements and satisfaction, without caring too much about the social group’s benefits.
5. Long-Term Orientation (LTO) focuses on the degree the society embraces, or does not embrace long-term devotion to traditional forward thinking values. High Long-Term Orientation ranking indicates that the country “*prescribes to the values of long-term commitments and respect for tradition*” (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004:211).

Figure 2.2, demonstrates all five dimensions graphically. In Figure 2.2, Hofstede has not scored the UAE on the LOT dimension. However, based on all the construction that is going on in the UAE and the focus shifting from oil resources to tourism, an assumption can be made that the UAE is making plans based on thinking long-term; hence, they are not likely to have a low score on the long-term orientation dimension.

**Figure 2.2 The Five Dimensions: Australia vs. Arab World**

Source: adapted from Hofstede (2006)

By definition, culture is a group's response to its social environment (Hofstede, 1991). According to Hickson and Pugh (1995:90), "*culture shapes everything*". However, it is not easy to define what the 'group' represents. Schein (1985) has investigated organisational cultures and defined three layers of culture:

- Behaviour and artefacts;
- Values and beliefs, and
- Underlying assumptions.

The generalisability of management practices across cultural contexts is challenged (for example, by Hofstede, 1980, and Triandis, 1994). Supporters of this conventional viewpoint also include House and Hanges (2004). Each employee has their own set of values, attitudes and beliefs, and management researchers have found that those cultural differences act as a set of filters through which employees view management situations. Those culturally-based differences affect the behaviour of the employees on projects. According to Cox, et. al., (2005), human behaviour varies across individuals and situations. However, it is possible to identify a deep-seated coherence which underlies the behaviour of all individuals. Management researchers such as Cox, et. al., (2005),



Cheung, et. al., (2003), and Adler (1997) all advocate that behavioural issues should be of interest, especially when it comes to project managers. According to Cox, et. al., (2005) motivation, communication, loyalty and satisfaction are all very important in the work place. Behaviour indicators such as the ones that Cox, et. al., (2005) researched can be used in a variety of industries, with project managers for example to better deal with employee performance. Other management researchers such as Cheung, et. al., (2003), believe that behaviours such as honesty, openness, communication, trust, co-operation and job satisfaction are highly desirable traits to have on construction projects, especially since construction projects require the concentrated effort of all members. Adler (1997) remarked that core managerial behaviours are leadership, decision-making and motivation.

### **2.1.3 Culture: A Summary**

Culture is defined in various ways. The consideration of diversity could be the primary characteristic of culture and it is generally accepted that culture is relative. In an Arabic setting, culture is highly influenced by the teachings of Islam, their main religion. Islam defines the cultural identity of Arabs and it plays an intimate part in constructing cultural identities. Expatriates and project managers need to appreciate the influence of culture when working in an Arabic environment.

## **2.2 Introduction to Project Management**

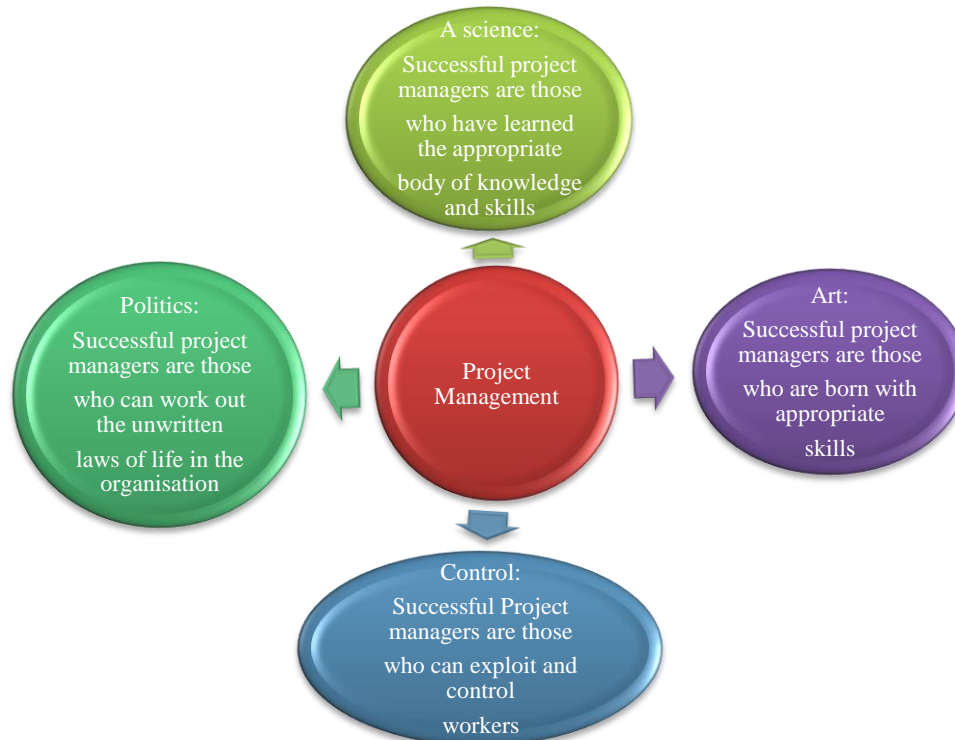
Parker and Craig (2008) point out that project management is an interdisciplinary science that is a subset of the larger body of literature on organisational science and management. For this reason project management research has over the past two decades “*drawn from the pool of interdisciplinary research among the social sciences*” (Parker and Craig, 2008:1).

A project manager is an individual who is in charge, who makes decisions and has the responsibility of leading people and the project, while at the same time managing the allocated resources and overseeing the planning and control of cost, time, schedule and work tasks (Cleland and King, 1993). The project manager tries to get the whole project completed on time, within the set budget, keeping the clients satisfied and running the whole project as smoothly as possible (Strang, 2005). Ultimately, a project manager is

accountable for the success or failure of the project. According to Nicholas and Steyn (2008), the project manager is the most important aspect of project management.

Figure 2.3 summarises what project management consists of. Project management is more than a science or an art; it also involves politics and control.

**Figure 2.3      The Art of Project Management**



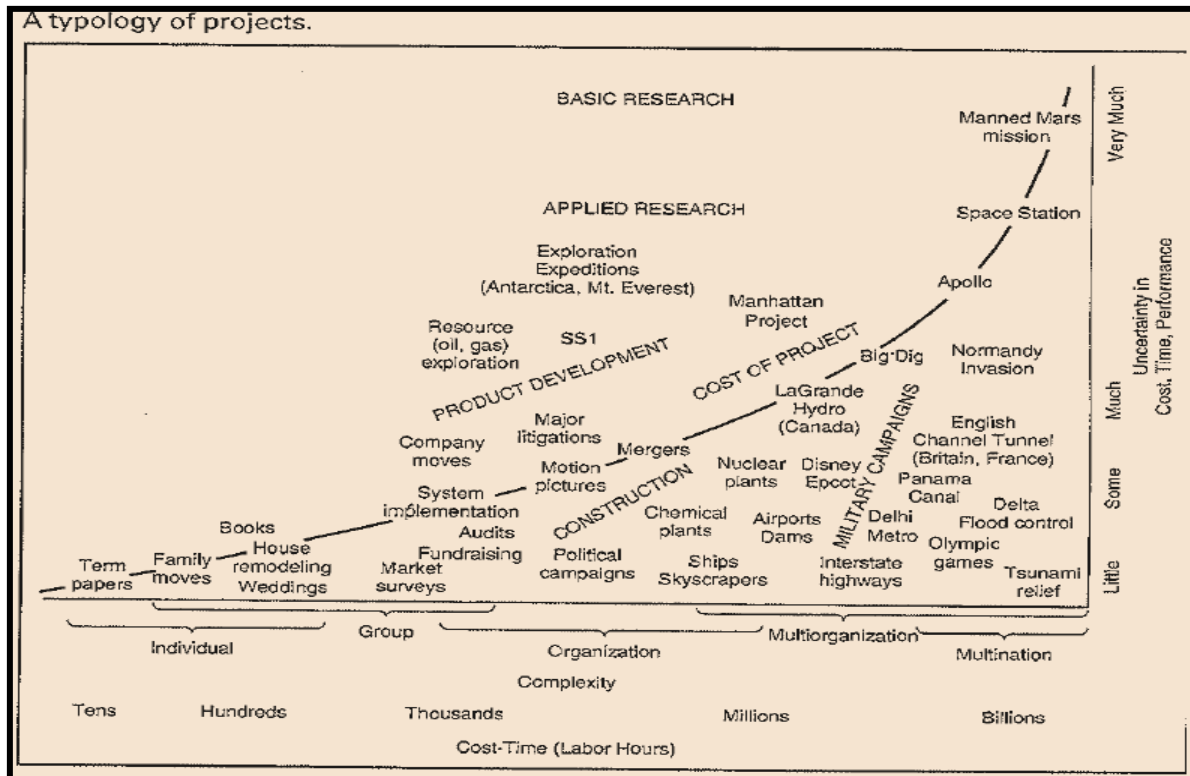
Source: Adapted from Heerkens, (2002:6)

Research suggests that a good manager uses a mix of science, art, politics and control. Figure 2.3, depicts these various parts of a project manager's role. These include individuals, cost, time, groups and organisations of various kinds, as well as performance and uncertainty. In addition, project managers need to be good leaders with well-developed people skills. It can be argued that their people skills are somewhat more important than their technical skills (Heerkens, 2002).

Projects can be seen as temporary activities. Every project has a beginning and an end. Projects are limited in *time* and they are *task* dependent. There are many definitions of what a project is, or ought to be, but all these attempts to summarise the notion of a project have a number of common themes: projects are unique; complex; they are applied in all sorts of environments; they have a start and a finish; they are 'one-offs';

and they have a range of objectives. Parker et. al., (2008:3) define a project as an “exceptional activity, drawing on multiple skills, to achieve a predetermined outcome”.

**Figure 2.4 A Typology of Projects**



Source: Nicholas, et. al., (2008: xxvii).

In Figure 2.4, one can see generalised project endeavours and examples of well-known projects. A project can be as small as planning a family picnic or as large a project as the Manned Mars mission.

The definition of the concept of project management as outlined above has certain problems. This concept is complicated and there is no universal definition of this concept that would be accepted by all the specialists working on the issue of project management. While analysing the concept of project management, it is necessary to dwell upon the nine major knowledge areas of project management (see Figure 2.5).

For the purpose of this thesis, the following definition of project management from the *PMBOK® (2004) Guide* will be used as this guide is widely used and recognised by industry professionals:

*“Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to a broad range of activities in order to meet the requirements of a particular project. Project management is comprised of five Project Management Process Groups – Initiating Processes, Planning Processes, Executing Processes, Monitoring and Controlling Processes, and Closing Processes – as well as nine Knowledge Areas. These nine Knowledge Areas centre on management expertise in Project Integration Management, Project Scope Management, Project Time Management, Project Cost Management, Project Quality Management, Project Human Resources Management, Project Communications Management, Project Risk Management and Project Procurement Management.”*

*PMBOK® (2004:8) Guide.*

This framework will be used as the basis for analysing and understanding the processes of project management. The nine (9) knowledge areas are illustrated in Figure 2.5.

**Figure 2.5 The Nine Areas of Project Management**

<b>1 Project Integration Management</b> 1.1 Project Plan Development 1.2 Project Plan Execution 1.3 Integrated Change Control	<b>2 Project Scope Management</b> 2.1 Initiation 2.2 Scope Planning 2.3 Scope Definition 2.4 Scope Verification 2.5 Scope Change Control	<b>3 Project Time Management</b> 3.1 Activity Definition 3.2 Activity Sequencing 3.3 Activity Duration Estimating 3.4 Schedule Development 3.5 Schedule Control
<b>4 Project Cost Management</b> 4.1 Resource Planning 4.2 Cost Estimating 4.3 Cost Budgeting 4.4 Cost Control	<b>5 Project Quality Management</b> 5.1 Quality Planning 5.2 Quality Assurance 5.3 Quality Control	<b>6 Project Human Resource Management</b> 6.1 Organisational Planning 6.2 Staff Acquisition 6.3 Team Development
<b>7 Project Communications Management</b> 7.1 Communications Planning 7.2 Information Distribution 7.3 Performance Reporting 7.4 Administrative	<b>8 Project Risk Management</b> 8.1 Risk Identification 8.2 Quantitative Risk Analysis 8.3 Risk Response Planning 8.4 Risk Monitoring and Control	<b>9 Project Procurement Management</b> 9.1 Procurement Planning 9.2 Solicitation Planning 9.3 Solicitation 9.4 Source Selection 9.5 Contract Administration 9.6 Contract Closeout

Source: Adapted from the *PMBOK® (2004:11) Guide*

### 2.2.1 Project Management and the Project Team

Research done by Betts, et. al., (2004) on teams working together and team-building has shown that the team leaders play a vital role in the success of the team. The researchers identified six important attributes team leaders should hold.

These attributes are:

- Being approachable;
- Being empathic;
- Being supportive;
- Being organised;
- Knowing each team member's role, and
- Knowing about the business.

Parker et. al., (2008:37) defined team-building as “*undertaking a process of planning and deliberate motivational and encouraging actions to bring about effective working practice*”. Nicholas, et. al., (2008) believe that project management is team work more than any other human endeavour.

On the other hand, project teams are influenced by culture and culture develops slowly among a group of people. By definition, culture is a group's response to its social environment (Hofstede, 1991). Culture is known to have multiple and various inclusive definitions. Some researchers such as Deal and Kennedy, (1982); Lukacs, (1992); Melville and Readings, (1995) and Bock (1999) apply the term ‘culture’ solely to what is observable and recordable. Hofstede (2004) believes that culture is either subjective or implicit.

Leung and Bond (2004) argue that if people from different backgrounds face the same problem, they form similar dimensions of social beliefs. They believe that diverse cultural backgrounds cause people to work differently and this can be observed as differences in behaviours.

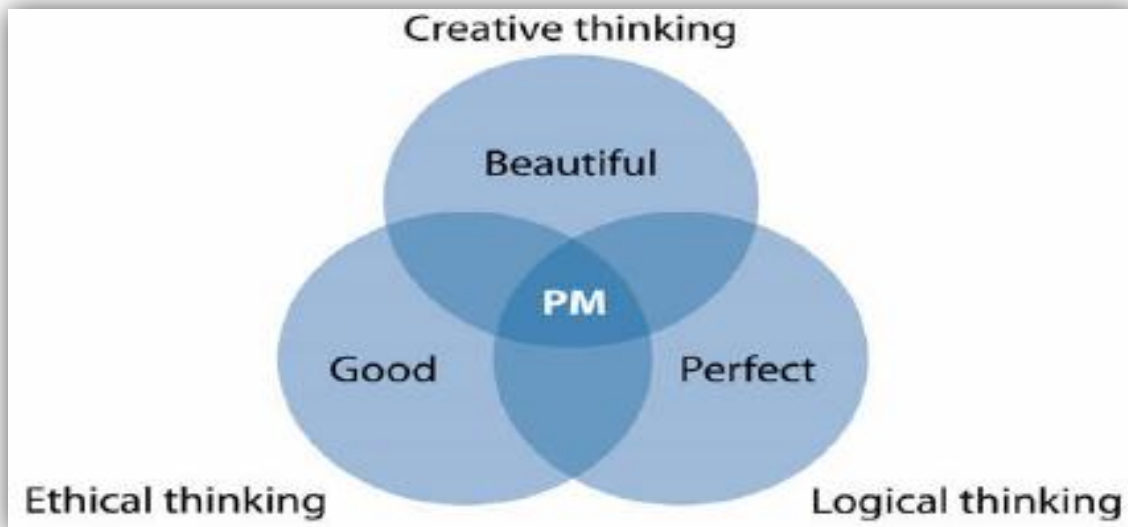
Nowadays, the effectiveness of management is more important than ever. Effective project management can save an organisation both money and time; a goal held by most companies. The development and progress of a company heavily relies on its management, and management can only be effective if the project managers have the ability to work cross-culturally.

At the present time, it is considered difficult to manage an organisation effectively without any strategic background, which defines the general development and the direction of the development of an organisation.

In the contemporary business environment, the question of project management is closely coupled with the development of efficient and effective management strategies and their practical implementation. Simultaneously, the notion of project management is more than just the strategic planning and implementation of the chosen strategies to improve the performance of an organisation. Indeed, project management may be viewed as the foundation on which the management of an organisation is constructed. This implies that, project management plays an essential role in the effective functioning of modern organisations.

### **2.2.2 The Meaning of Project Management**

As Helgadottir (2008), pointed out, project management is in itself a straightforward process. However, it is the environment of today's projects that brings complexity into the equation. Those complex issues that a project manager has to deal with include the objectives of the project, the stakeholders, the risks, the deliverables and the effects of the project on people. This statement alone raises the notion of accountability and the important role the project manager plays in managing a myriad of complex issues. The diagram in Figure 2.6, prepared by Helgadottir (2008), illustrates a model of the competencies shared by today's project managers and how they form part of an informed decision. However, it is only possible to make an educated decision in a project environment if the individual making the decision has an adequate understanding of the culture of the place where the decision needs to be made: in this case the UAE.

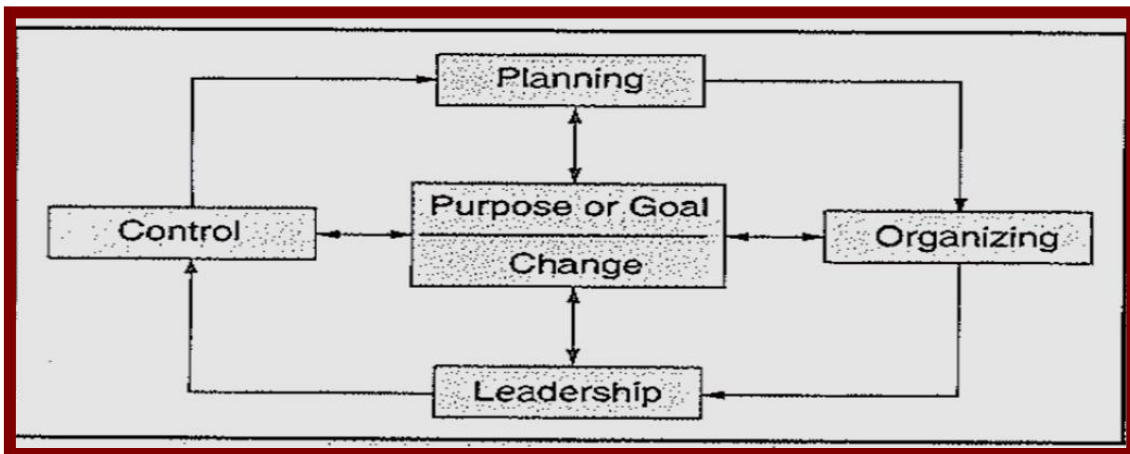
**Figure 2.6** The Project Managers' Thinking Competencies

Source: Helgadottir (2008:744).

It can be generalised that each of the competencies contained within Figure 2.6, being “*creative thinking, logical thinking and ethical thinking*” (Helgadottir, 2008:744), are all in fact the underlying values and processes that underpin each decision made by a project manager.

Planning, organising, leadership and control are the major components of the concept of project management. Figure 2.7 summarises those functions. However, it is almost impossible to use this definition of project management without further defining some of the terms used in it (Viardot, 2005). To put it more precisely, it is necessary to point out that the project itself is a finite venture undertaken by an organisation to create a unique product or service that brings about beneficial change or added value (Mohrman, 1998). Hence, it is important that organisations clearly define the goals and objectives of the project and implement their resources in such a way that will bring about certain benefits to the organisation. This means that organisations actually manage the project and that project management should incorporate all the major managerial functions and processes that are related to the implementation and fulfilment of the project.



**Figure 2.7** Five Functions of the Project Manager

Source: Nicholas et. al., (2008:4)

The activities of the project manager can be classified into five functions as seen in Figure 2.7.

- 1 The Planning Function: setting a goal and achieving it.
- 2 The Organising Function: planning for the work that needs to be done, for example, training people to allocate capital and creating communication channels.
- 3 The Leadership Function: the project manager needs to direct and motivate the project team to attain the goal.
- 4 The Control Function: evaluating work performance.
- 5 The Change Function: this function assesses the previous four functions to determine their effectiveness and if any change is necessary.

It is possible to give a variety of other definitions for project management. In this respect, the organisation's or the individual's point of view on project management determines and influences its definition to a significant extent (Toor and Ofori, 2008).

### 2.2.3 Project Management: Summary

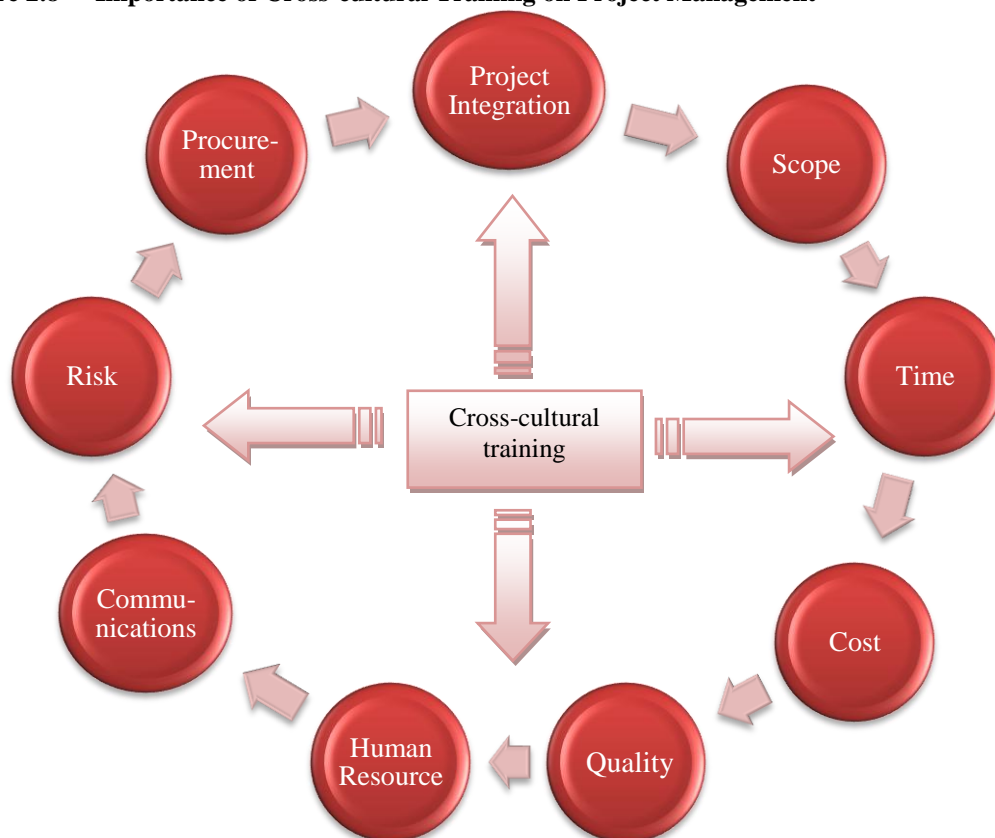
Naturally, project management can hardly be effective without taking into consideration all of the nine PMBOK® knowledge areas of project management. The development of project management is not only important in modern business, but it is also an essential to the progress of any organisation that deals with projects, for example construction projects. In fact, nowadays project management is viewed as the function of an



organisation that leads to customer satisfaction. It would be almost impossible to practice project management in a foreign country without the appropriate cross-cultural training and preparation.

Project managers need to be appropriately cross-culturally trained in order to function at their highest potential and they need to develop effective project management skills and techniques. As shown in Figure 2.8, culture affects every part of project management. As the literature on cross-cultural training indicates, without adequate preparation the project managers will find it difficult to deliver projects on time. Projects maybe delayed or incomplete or the project managers may be replaced.

**Figure 2.8 Importance of Cross-cultural Training on Project Management**



Source: Author, 2011

Additionally, every good project manager should not only be good at managing people, but also at leading them to success, by being able to motivate the project personnel. However, this cannot be done without appropriate cross-cultural preparation, which would give the project manager the knowledge and insight on how to deal with different cultures such as the Arab culture.

#### **2.2.4 Leadership Definitions**

According to Robbins (2001:314) “*leadership is the ability to influence a group towards the achievement of goals*”.

Lussier (1990), defines leadership as “*the process of influencing employees to work toward the achievement of objectives*”. While Tosi, et. al., (1994:550) suggest that “*leadership is interpersonal influence in which one person is able to gain complaisance from another in direction of organisationally desired goals*”.

Despite the multitude of definitions, all of them have a common theme of directing the group towards a goal. Yousef (1998:275) argues that leadership represents a significant factor in the determination of success or failure of organisations. Hence, determining what leadership style works best in the UAE is of high importance.

### **2.3 Project Leadership Definition**

Interestingly, PMBOK® does not provide a definition for ‘project leadership’ or ‘project leader’, nor does it define what a successful project is.

There is no universal definition of leadership, but according to Hodgetts (2002) leadership is the process of influencing people to direct their efforts toward the achievement of a particular goal. Leadership is widely recognised as being of high importance and many believe that the terms ‘manager’ and ‘leader’ have distinctions in characteristics and behaviours. There are some that believe that leaders are born and managers are trained (Zaleznik, 2003). In addition, Diamond (2007) states that being a leader is a status that needs to be earned through respect, it cannot be learned.

Luthans and Doh (2009) summarised the perceived characteristic differences between managers and leaders as shown in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2 Differences in Characteristics Between Managers and Leaders**

CHARACTERISTICS	
Manager	Leader
▪ Can learn necessary skills	▪ Has innate characteristics
▪ Takes care of where you are	▪ Takes you to new horizons
▪ Oversees	▪ Motivates
▪ Points out flaws to improve on	▪ Gives recognition for good work
▪ Are fact-finders	▪ Deals with ambiguity
▪ Focus on efficiency	▪ Are decision-makers
▪ Are given immediate authority	▪ Focus on effectiveness
▪ Follows company objectives	▪ Sets new standards
▪ Has a present vision	▪ Has future vision
▪ Does things right	▪ Does the right thing

Source: Luthans and Doh (2009:475)

Yukl, (1990, 2002, 2006), Fu, et. al., (2004) and others have conducted fundamental research relating to managerial practices. They tested the relationships between societal cultural values, individual social beliefs and the perceived effectiveness of different influence strategies in twelve nations and concluded that the focus from an effectiveness point of view should be transferred from macro-level cultural variables to micro-level individual factors. This leads to the conclusion that manager practices at a global level alone are not enough for a successful business.

Many years ago, Hemphill (1949) followed by Katz, et. al., (1950), and Katz, et. al., (1951) as well as Katz and Kahn (1952) developed a model where management and leadership styles were divided into three dimensions:

- Task-oriented behaviours;
- Relationship-oriented behaviours, and
- Participative leadership.

Through this three-dimensional model, the authors tried to understand how culture translated in practice. Instead of investigating the degree of expatriate adjustment, process and modes of adjustment were surveyed (Shay and Baack, 2004). Shay, et. al., (2004), demonstrated a positive relationship between models of adjustment and expatriate managerial performance.

### 2.3.1 Research in Project Success and Failure Causes

The Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL) in the USA surveyed thousands of projects over a 30-year period to determine project success and failure factors (CCL, 2009). The study found that relationship-building behaviour was the primary contributing factor to project success and when missing, to project failure. Technical ability (or lack thereof) was cited as the major cause of project success or failure in only 6 per cent out of 11 per cent of projects.

The term ‘relationship-building’ used here is defined as “*caring, fairness, demonstrating trustworthiness and understanding*” (DeCarlo, 2004:4). It is therefore reasonable to assume that this term, and hence the skills required for success, aligns more with the definition of leadership than that of management.

### 2.3.2 What Leading Project Management Professionals Say ~ Skills Required for Effective Project Management

Andersen, et. al., (2009), in their book *Goal Directed Project Management* cite the poor choice of a project manager as a common reason for project failure and comment that the project manager should be chosen for their leadership qualities, rather than their background.

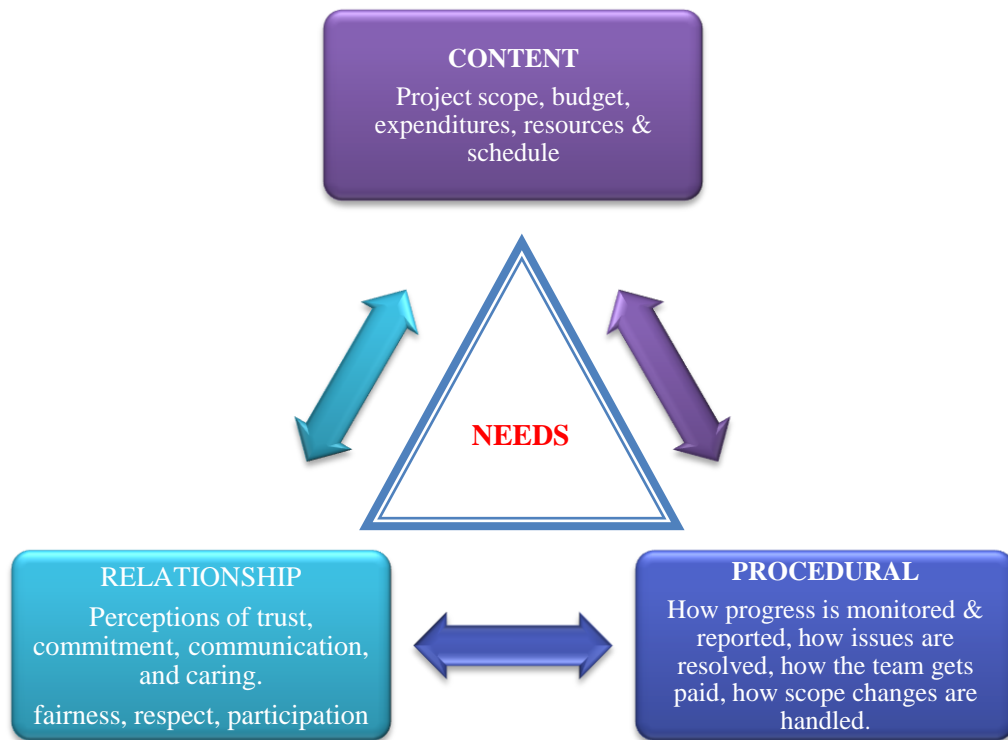
They argue that a project manager should be someone who:

- Has time and energy;
- Is able to plan, organise and control the work methodically;
- Can inspire others to work, and
- Is able to communicate in the best possible way with the base organisation and the project participants.

Culp and Smith (2005), use the concept of a ‘triangle of needs’ to address the requirements of an effective project manager. The triangle shown in Figure 2.9, represents the three basic needs of the project team members. Each side of the triangle is the same length, indicating that each of the three needs carries the same level of importance in relation to project success. Therefore, for a project to be successful, the

project manager needs to spend an equal amount of time on all three of the needs. Relationships are an important part of this analysis.

**Figure 2.9 Triangle of Needs**



Source: Culp and Smith (2005:2)

Culp et. al., (2005) argue that the reason for project failure is that project managers do not spend an equivalent amount of time on each of the three needs. The same authors cite the following uneven breakdown spent on a typical project:

- Content needs 75%
- Procedural needs 20-25%
- Relationship needs 0-5%

There is a clear line drawn between subordinates and managers within Arab companies. The ones with the most authority are highly respected and usually their age and family background play a significant role in the leadership status. This leadership culture can be observed not only in the business world, but also in public society. Arabic managers are said to behave like 'fathers/mothers' and protectors of their subordinates, hence,

they use an authoritarian style of leadership. Even though research shows that Arab culture is not generally individualistic, (Al-Omari, 2003) managers tend to view organisational problems as subjective. So, when managers have solutions for the problems, they tend to be very definite with their decisions.

Shay and Tracey (1997) concluded that on the one hand the behaviour of expatriates depends on their orientation towards making personal changes and work role innovations, and on the other it depends on their engagement to facilitate positive relations with those in their immediate work context.

In his book, *The Blind Men and the Elephant: Mastering Project Work*, Schmaltz (2003) cites project team incoherence as the most common reason for project failure. He explains that this is caused by the inability of team members to create a common understanding of their shared experiences. He further argues that traditional project management can stifle team innovation and creativity by insisting that team members conform to the wants of the project manager. Davies and Hobday (2005:268), in their book *The Business of Projects*, similarly support this notion by indicating that effective project managers need to be able to “*appreciate the value of different experiences and skills (of team members) and manage multiple interfaces between team members*”.

Burke (2003), in his book, *Project Management Planning & Control Techniques*, says to be effective, a project manager must have:

- Efficient administrative skills;
- Technical know-how, and
- Appropriate leadership style.

Burke (2003:309) further goes on to say, “*the success of a project may be directly dependent on good leadership*”.

DeCarlo (2004:4), points to motivation, trust and confidence as necessary skills for a project manager to hold to achieve project success:

*“The job of the ... project manager is to gain and sustain the commitment of others. The successful project manager is able to unleash motivation and innovation, establish the trust and confidence to succeed, and ensure that the customer receives value each step of the way. All of these critical outcomes call for leadership. When ... projects fail, it is most often due to a lack of leadership or poor leadership skills.”*

Table 2.3 summarises the skills and abilities required of an effective project manager as outlined by some well-known researchers in this area.

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**Table 2.3 Effective project manager – skills/abilities list**

Project Management Industry Professional(s)	Book	Skills/abilities of an effective project manager (i.e. required for project success)		Causes of project success/failure
Andersen et. al., (2009)	<i>Goal-directed Project Management</i>	Has available time and energy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can plan, organise and control the work methodically.</li> <li>Can inspire others to work;</li> <li>Can communicate in the best possible way with the base organisation and the project participants</li> </ul>		Poor choice of project manager is a common reason for project failure
Culp and Smith (2005)	<i>The Lead Dog has the Best View</i>	Equal focus should be placed on each of these three areas. Projects fail because of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content (project scope, budget, expenditures, resources relationship and communication and schedule)</li> <li>Procedural (how progress is monitored and reported, how project is lead, how issues are resolved, how the team gets paid, how scope changes are handled)</li> <li>Relationship (perceptions of trust, commitment, communication, fairness, respect, participation and caring)</li> </ul>		
Randolph and Posner (1988)	<i>Effective Project Planning &amp; Management: Getting the Job Done</i>	Ten rules for project success: <i>Management-related:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine the project objectives</li> <li>Establish checkpoints, activities, relationships and time estimates</li> <li>Draw a picture of the</li> <li>Set a clear project goal</li> <li>Keep everyone connected with the project informed</li> </ul>	<i>Leadership-related:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct people individually and as a project team Reinforce the commitment and excitement of the project team</li> <li>Build agreements that vitalise team members</li> <li>Empower yourself and others on the team</li> <li>Encourage risk taking and creativity</li> </ul>	Follow the ten rules to achieve project success
Schmaltz (2003)	<i>The Blind Men and the Elephant:</i>	Ability to find common understanding with individual group members	Project failure commonly due to project team incoherence	



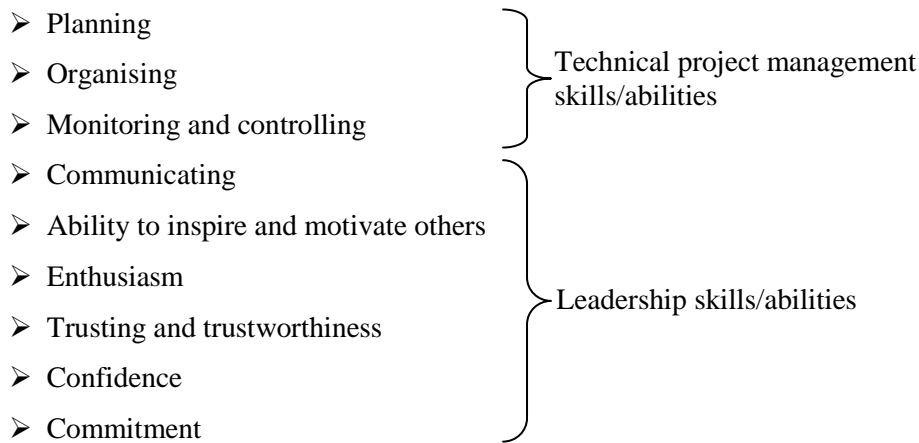
# CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Project Management Industry Professional(s)	Book	Skills/abilities of an effective project manager (i.e. required for project success)		Causes of project success/failure
Davies and Hobday (2005)	<i>The Business of Projects</i>	Ability to “appreciate the value of different experiences and skills (of team members) and manage multiple interfaces between team members”		
Burke (2003)	<i>Project Management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Efficient administrative skills</li> <li>▪ Technical know-how</li> <li>▪ Appropriate leadership style</li> </ul>		“The success of a project may be directly dependent on good leadership”
DeCarlo (2004)	<i>Extreme Project Management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unleash motivation and innovation</li> <li>▪ Establish the trust and confidence to succeed</li> <li>▪ Ensure that the customer receives value each step of the skills way</li> </ul>		Failure most often due to a lack of leadership skill
Davidson Frame (1988)	<i>Managing Projects in Organisations</i>	<p>Human resource management with “a knack for dealing with project staff, management, vendors, and fellow managers who control needed resources.</p> <p>Ability to proactively guide projects forward.</p> <p>This is related to leadership.</p>		Poor human resource management is a common cause of failure

Source: Author (2011)

The following list is drawn from the keywords in Table 2.3 is given bellow.

Skills/abilities of an effective project manager:



Leadership is a concept in social sciences, and just like all the other concepts it has no single or unique description. It has many different definitions. Leadership skills are also necessary on the technical side of project management. For example, if a project manager is organising an event he/she is much more effective if he/she is leading the project management team as opposed to only managing it. A good leader is able to make the team feel like they are part of something big and then all team members are motivated to achieve their best and to realize the project goals.

## 2.4 Project Leadership

Strang (2005) defines project leadership as a behavioural exercise in which the project manager motivates project personnel and enlists their cooperation throughout the project to successfully accomplish the project's goals. Parker, et. al., (2008), believe that a project manager needs to develop excellent leadership skills in order to handle the unique, fast-paced, time-limited characteristics of a project. Pinto and Slevin (1988); Cash and Fox (1992); Cleland (1995); Strang (2005); Parker and Craig (2008) and many other researchers all agree that leadership is critical for the success of a project. Pinto and Trailer (1998) believe that there are not many activities that are as leadership-intensive as project management. Posner (1987) believes that true leadership on the part of the project managers has been shown to be one of the important characteristics in successful projects.

## CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Every project manager should be a good leader and be able to motivate the project personnel. However, since the UAE is culturally a very different environment to Australia, project management could be very challenging without the appropriate and adequate preparation of project managers.

### 2.4.1 Leadership Styles

Leadership styles have been classed differently in literature and this is demonstrated in Figure 2.10.

**Figure 2.10 Leadership Definitions**

Table 1 Leadership style in previous studies					
Lewin et al. (1939)	Likert (1967)	Vroom and Yetton (1973)	Bass and Valenzi (1974)	Muna (1980)	Ali (1993)
<b>Autocratic</b> Leader makes the decision and closely supervises	<b>Exploitative authoritative (System 1)</b> This system utilizes an autocratic, top-down approach to leadership. Employee evaluation is based on punishment and occasionally on rewards. Downward communication is predominant and there is little lateral interaction or teamwork. Both control and decision making reside at the top level of the organization	<b>A1</b> Manager makes decision	<b>System 1</b> Direction	<b>System 1</b> Own decision	<b>System 1</b> Own decision
<b>Democratic</b> Leader allows participation in decisions and does not closely supervise	<b>Benevolent authoritative (System 2)</b> This system is similar to System 1 but management tends to be more paternalistic. Employees are given a little more freedom than in System 1. Management defines the limited boundaries for interaction, communication and decision making	<b>A11</b> Manager makes decision obtaining necessary information from subordinate	<b>System 2</b> Negotiation	<b>System 2</b> Consultation with subordinates	<b>System 2</b> Pseudo-consultative
<b>Laissez-faire</b> Leader takes a leave-the-employees-alone approach and closely supervises	<b>Consultative (System 3)</b> Employees have more interaction, communication and decision making than in System 2. Although employees are consulted about problems and decisions, management makes the final decisions	<b>C1</b> Manager shares problem with subordinates; makes own decision	<b>System 3</b> Consultation with subordinates	<b>System 3</b> Joint decision	<b>System 3</b> Consultative
	<b>Participative (System 4) Group</b> This system makes extensive use of employee participation, involvement and groups. The groups are highly involved in setting goals, making decisions, improving methods and appraising results. Communication occurs both laterally and vertically. The linking-pin concept is used	<b>C11</b> Manager shares problem with group; makes own decision	<b>System 4</b> Participation	<b>System 4</b> Delegation of decision to subordinates	<b>System 4</b> Participative
		<b>G1</b> Manager and subordinate together arrive at mutually agreeable decision	<b>System 5</b> Delegation of decision to subordinates		<b>System 5</b> Pseudo-participative
		<b>G11</b> Manager and group discuss, evaluate and make a group decision			<b>System 6</b> Delegation of decision to subordinates

Source: Darwish and Yousef (1998:276)

Figure 2.10 provides a summary of previous studies and the various leadership styles that have been uncovered. Figure 2.10, also illustrates how different researchers will label the same style of leadership differently.

Determining the most appropriate leadership style for the UAE is of high importance. There are many factors that have to be considered to determine the correct leadership style.

Whyte (1988) believes that leadership styles are dependent on the following:

the power available to the leader; the nature of the task at hand; the experience of the subordinates; the preferred leadership style of the leader/subordinates; the culture of the organisation, and the time available to complete the task.

Blanchard and Wakin (1991), argue that the right leadership style is heavily dependent on the degree of difficulty of the task. Crucial to this thesis, Robbins (1993) suggests that national culture plays a very demanding role in deciding the effectiveness of leadership style. Similarly, Bass (1990) also argues that culture influences different leadership styles. In addition, Bass et. al., (1979), Badawy (1980) and Adler (1991) all point out that national boundaries make substantial differences in leadership styles.

Ali and Krishnan (1995) investigated the decision-making styles of the UAE national managers, both Arab and expatriate, and his findings all point out that the consultative leadership style was the one favoured in the UAE. Moreover, Yousef (1998) conducted a study with 235 individuals working in 14 different organisations in the UAE, and this study too pointed out that the *consultative* leadership style is the one that is the most common and effective leadership style in this particular region.

#### **2.4.2 Leadership in the UAE**

Badaway (1980), conducted a study on leadership practices in the Middle East, and he reported that managers from Arab countries have higher attitude scores for ability for leadership and initiative than those from any other country. However, Arab managers scored significantly lower in sharing information and objectives, participation and internal control than managers from other countries. Badaway (1980) concluded that those results were due to the Arab culture. Yousef's (1998) research indicates that Western management practices are very evident in the Arabian Gulf region since there are many Westerners doing business there. According to Yousef (2010), because the Arabs from the Gulf region are wealthy, many Arabs from that region study in Western universities. Research indicates that there is a tendency among young Arabs to use the *participative* leadership style. This style of leadership is said to be becoming more popular among highly educated managers of all ages (Yousef, 2010). This is demonstrated in Figure 2.11. It shows the difference between Middle Eastern

## CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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management and Western management styles. As shown by Figure 2.11, a successful Western manager is not necessarily going to be successful in the Middle East, especially if he/she is unable to change his/her managing style to suit the environment/situation.

**Figure 2.11 Styles of Mid-Eastern Managers**

<b>Differences in Middle Eastern and Western Management</b>		
<b>Management Dimensions</b>	<b>Middle Eastern Management</b>	<b>Western Management</b>
Leadership	Highly authoritarian tone, rigid instructions. Too many management directives.	Less emphasis on leader's personality, considerable weight on leader's style and performance.
Organizational structures	Highly bureaucratic, overcentralized, with power and authority at the top. Vague relationships. Ambiguous and unpredictable organization environments.	Less bureaucratic, more delegation of authority. Relatively decentralized structure.
Decision making	Ad hoc planning, decisions made at the highest level of management. Unwillingness to take high risk inherent in decision making.	Sophisticated planning techniques, modern tools of decision making, elaborate management information systems.
Performance evaluation and control	Informal control mechanisms, routine checks on performance. Lack of vigorous performance evaluation systems.	Fairly advanced control systems focusing on cost reduction and organizational effectiveness.
Personnel policies	Heavy reliance on personal contacts and getting individuals from the "right social origin" to fill major positions.	Sound personnel management policies. Candidates' qualifications are usually the basis for selection decisions.
Communication	The tone depends on the communicants. Social position, power, and family influence are ever-present factors. Chain of command must be followed rigidly. People relate to each other tightly and specifically. Friendships are intense and binding.	Stress usually on equality and a minimization of difference. People relate to each other loosely and generally. Friendships not intense and binding.

Source: Badaway (1980:57)

### 2.4.3 Team Leadership

The project manager who is also the team leader needs to be aware of the needs of the individuals on the team, the needs of the team, as well as remaining conscious of what the task needs are. It is important to address individual needs first, because if the individual needs (Maslow, 1954) are not being satisfied, the individual is less likely to be an effective team player. Once the basic individual needs are satisfied, the individual team members can work effectively together and interact as a team. Once the individual as well as the team needs have been addressed, the project team can deliver the project objectives successfully by addressing the task's needs and by working effectively together.

### 2.4.4 Team Motivation

Motivation is a "psychological process through which unsatisfied wants and/or needs lead to drives that are aimed at goals or incentives" (Luthans et. al., 2009:619). There

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CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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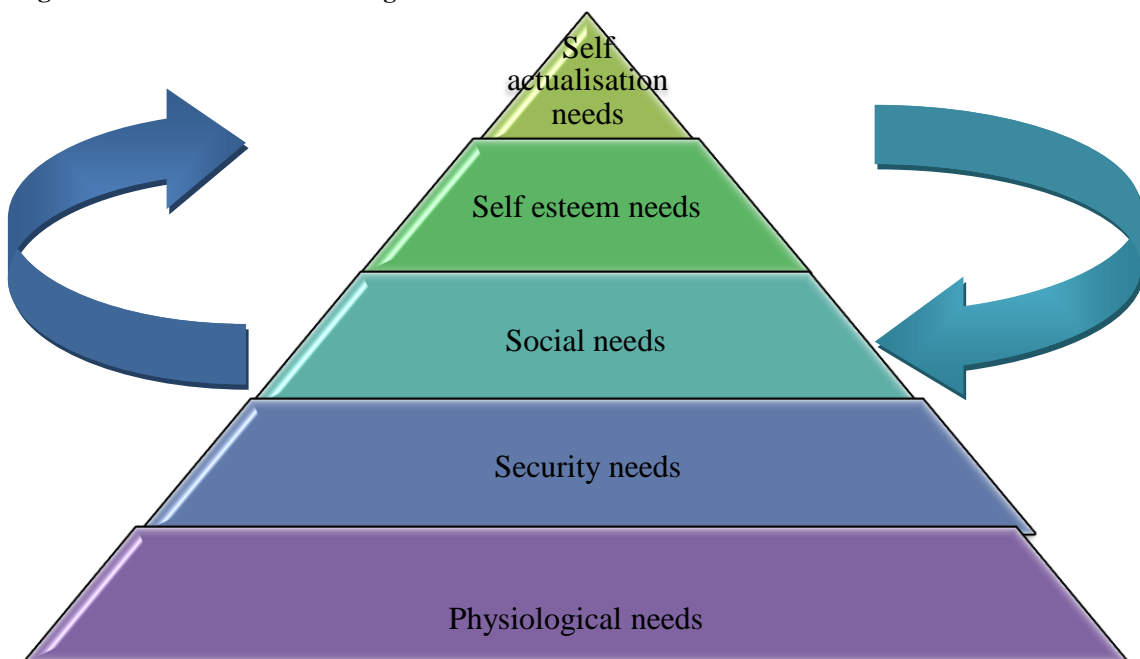
are a vast number of researchers who have researched motivation and the needs theory such as Alderfer (1972); McClelland (1961); Herzberg, et. al., (1959), but Maslow's classic research will be used for the purposes of this research.

The psychologist Abraham Maslow (1954) came up with a motivation framework, a 'hierarchy of needs', which show that people are always striving to achieve higher order needs, but need to firstly achieve the lower needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs consists of five different levels of need, from bottom (priority) to top:

- 1     Physiological: basic physical needs for water, food, clothing and shelter;
- 2     Safety: desire for security, stability and the absence of pain;
- 3     Social: desire to interact and affiliate with others and to feel wanted by others;
- 4     Self-esteem: need for power and status, and
- 5     Self-actualisation: desire to reach one's full potential; to become everything one is capable of becoming.

The hierarchy of needs is shown in Figure 2.12.

**Figure 2.12     Maslow's Triangle of Needs**



Source: (Hodgetts, et. al., 2006:371)

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It could be assumed that this framework is universal. However, culture influences the specific content and goals that are pursued by individuals from different environments. Research shows that Emirati managers place the self-actualisation need in the middle of the pyramid while placing the social needs and the self-esteem needs at the top, while others remain the same. The Emiratis value maintenance roles that impact organisational behaviour and respond greatly to socio-emotional rewards such as praise. The individual is working for the benefit of the family and relatives that they support and all monetary or material rewards should be geared towards them.

Adler (1991:161) believes that motivation differs across cultures:

*“Unfortunately, American as well as non-American managers have tended to treat American theories as the best or only way to understand motivation. They are neither. American motivation theories, although assumed to be universal, have failed to provide consistently useful explanations outside the United States. Managers must therefore guard against imposing domestic American theories on their multinational business practices.”*

The most comprehensive study was completed by Haire, et. al., (1966) where they surveyed 3,641 managers from 14 countries. Their research suggests that Maslow’s ‘needs’ are important but, depending on the culture, their importance ranking moves up or down. Nevis (1983) suggests that Maslow’s hierarchy is too westernised and that a more Eastern (collective) perspective is necessary. Eastern cultures emphasise the needs of society over the needs of the individual.

### **2.4.5 Summary of Leadership and Team Motivation**

International project management and business management have suffered because of the lack of a codified approach to the training of people to work in multicultural environments.

Regardless of how well the management functions are carried out (and how good the management skills and abilities are), the project can still fail if the right team dynamics are not achieved. That is why project managers need significant leadership skills and abilities. Hence, project managers must be leaders if they are to be successful. More



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importantly, they have to choose the correct style of leadership depending on the country they are working in.

In the UAE, teams on a project commonly encompass representatives from all over the world, and in some cases those individuals join the team at different stages of the project life cycle. Hence, it can be very challenging for the project manager to manage such a diverse team. It is advisable that the team works closely together in planning and setting goals, organising resources and deciding on what needs to be done.

Team development is of great importance, especially since project management is all about teamwork. Hence, enhancing the ability of the team to function effectively will, in return, have a positive impact on the project itself. Individual development, both managerial and technical, is the necessary basis to develop a well-functioning team. In addition, effective team development is critical to the project meeting its objectives and team development is a process that is continuous for the life of the project.

If the project team works well together, the team can be effective and efficient in a number of ways related to the following characteristics:

- A wide range of skills;
- Collective decision-making;
- Synergy (as it generates more output);
- Technical and emotional support;
- Problem-solving;
- Increased understanding of different markets;
- Helps trigger creativity, and
- May lead to better decision-making.

In addition, Hofstede's (1991) cultural dimension shows that the Emirates are a collectivist society and teamwork has always been regarded as a vital process to success. In comparison, Australia is an individualistic society. For this reason, it is fundamental for everyone in the team to understand the objective and goals of the team



and to work together to achieve them. The team is the most influential factor in sustaining success on a project, not the individual. This is why most people are more successful when working in a team than working alone.

#### **2.4.6 Why do Expatriates Fail in UAE?**

Although expatriate success is fairly high in the UAE compared to other nations, failures still do occur. One of the main contributing factors to expatriate failure is an inability to adjust to the UAE environment rather than a lack of technical competence.

This comes as no surprise as this is the number one cited reason for general expatriate failures in almost any country (Hodgetts, et. al., 2006). Another reason for expatriate failure is much more unique to the UAE and its Islamic ties. While Dubai is fairly liberal when it comes to mixing Western conventions with traditional Islamic ways, some other regions in the UAE are much stricter such as Abu Dhabi. This has led to a slightly higher than normal failure rate of expatriate females compared with male counterparts due to Islamic customs, where women are not meant to get involved with business.

Another recognised weakness of many companies is that they do not give sufficient language training to their personnel. Even though most business is done in English, expatriates who only speak English but are doing business in a non-English speaking country such as the UAE are at a disadvantage (Blue and Haynes, 1977). Research shows that many host country nationals would like to see changes and improvements in some styles of expatriate managers. Those changes include the expatriate manager's leadership style, decision-making, communication and group work (Luthans, et. al., 2009).

In terms of leadership, the following changes would be desirable:

- Expatriate managers need to be friendlier;
- More accessible, and
- Respect subordinates and their suggestions.

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In terms of decision-making, the host country nations would like a clear definition of goals and greater involvement in the decision-making process by those who will be affected by the decisions.

In terms of communication, there should be more group problem-solving and teamwork, as well as exchange of opinions and ideas between managers and subordinates. This indicates that the training approaches used need to reflect both the industrial and the cultural environment.

In 2008, the UAE Ministry of Labour reported that expatriates make up more than 90% of the labour force in the private sector, at about 3,113,000 foreign workers employed by 260,000 organisations.

Employee turnover can be damaging to the companies because they may lose business, money and it could harm their reputation. To the expatriates who are unsuccessful it could be damaging to their career prospects and their self-esteem.

Project management is a leadership role in which the individual needs to plan, budget, co-ordinate, monitor and control the operation of the entire project from the beginning to the end. This is done by using various techniques and skills across a broad range of activities in order to meet the requirements of that particular project (Bass and Stogdill, 1990). However, many companies still believe that because their project manager has the technical competency he/she will be successful regardless of the location and hence they do not offer cross-cultural training.

However, the Arab and Australian cultures are very different, and if the company disregards those real and considerable cultural differences, it will have a negative effect on the project manager. Hence, to get expatriates ready for their overseas assignments and to help them adjust more quickly and efficiently to a new and unfamiliar culture, cross-cultural training and preparation is the key.

It would be risky to assume that the same expatriate managerial behaviours, positive or negative, are going to affect foreign nationals in the same way as in the expatriate's home country. Expatriates need to know what behaviours should be avoided and which they should engage in. This will differ from country to country.

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Researchers such as Porter (1996) have indicated that just because an employee is successful in his/her home country, it is not a guarantee that the employee will be successful in a foreign environment. Unless those potential expatriates are aware of the significance that the cultural differences play and what those cultural differences are, then they need to be trained in cross-cultural awareness. Learning about a new culture and how to conduct business and behave socially in the new environment takes a long time. Goodman (1994:41), pointed out a very significant element of culture:

*“In many respects, one can think of culture as being analogous to an iceberg. As with an iceberg there is the part of the culture that is clearly in sight and there is a larger part of culture (the most dangerous) that is submerged, out of sight, below the waterline, waiting to destroy any business venture if people are unaware of its hidden dangers”.*

The statement above by Goodman (1994) suggests that it is easy to see cultural elements such as language, clothing and architecture. However, it is harder to see and recognise elements of culture that are “*under the water*”. Those may include business ethics, employee loyalty and morality, motivation as well as many other factors, which is why every potential expatriate needs to be equipped with adequate and appropriate cross-cultural training.

There is no doubt that learning the correct business, social and cultural practices may take a significant investment of time and money, but it is necessary since culture plays a significant role in all aspects of business.

#### **2.4.7 Selecting the ‘Right’ People for the Job**

*“Many researchers argue that companies have failed to pay attention to screening, selection and training of potential expatriate staff and the non-technical skills they should possess.”* (Forster, 2000:63).

An error commonly made by companies is to select staff that have been successful in the home country to move and work to another country without testing them. These companies fail to realise that these employees may need additional qualities such as being able to adjust quickly to new and unfamiliar environments and having the desire

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to learn about new cultures as well as being willing to change (Porter and Tansky, 1999).

One more major error that the companies make is the lack of cross-cultural training that they provide for the employees. Tung (1988), in her research was able to show evidence that positively linked cross-cultural training to improved (overseas) success.

The preparation of expatriate staff is important to help them be better prepared for their new unfamiliar environment. It gives them an idea of what to expect, as well as it helps them to avoid any major errors in business dealings and social interactions. Even with adequate preparation, expatriates will not be able to function at their full capacity as soon as they arrive in the UAE. This is why cross-cultural training needs to be an ongoing process, without it expatriates will struggle in the new environment and may even return to their home country prematurely.

Once again, selecting the right people for the job is important, as the selected individuals need to have a desire and readiness to learn. Porter et. al., (1999) and VandeWalle (1997) referred to this as the 'learning orientation', where people with high learning orientations like challenges and are ready to learn and people with low learning orientations like to play it safe and do not like the same challenges as their high learning counterparts. Those researchers argue that employees with high learning orientations are better candidates for overseas assignments as they want to learn and the training provided to them will have a higher impact on them. This is important since, no matter how good a training program is, if the participants are not willing to learn new skills and aptitudes, the training is useless.

The way to ensure that the 'right' people can be chosen for the overseas assignment is by pre-testing the employees. It is important that the chosen employees are able to adapt to new and unfamiliar situations. Porter et. al., (1996) believe that this characteristic is very important to success.

#### **2.4.8 Cross-Cultural Training**

In 1980, Hofstede carried out a study of top-ranking goals for professional technical personnel from a large variety of countries. In this study 'training' was ranked as number the one priority (Luthans and Doh, (2009:74).

Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) as well as Stroh and Caligiuri (2000) have pointed out that for developmental and functional reasons, successful expatriate assignments are invaluable to companies. Perhaps this is why expatriate management literature has paid a great deal of attention to the management of cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates (Harris and Moran, 1989; Black and Gregerson, 1992). It is very understandable that the expatriate management literature focuses on expatriate training and adjustment when so many expatriates fail. Expatriates are regarded as having failed in their overseas assignment if they return early from their assignment (Adler, 2001). There are also the non-financial effects of failure, such as the loss of business opportunities and damage to the company's reputation (Black et. al., 1992 and Naumann, 1992). Nevertheless, one should not forget that there are also psychological issues associated with failure, with the expatriate most likely having lower self-confidence and damaged self-esteem (Mendenhall et. al., 1985; Tung, 1987).

Adjustment problems can be minimised through the careful selection and training of employees. Cross-cultural training and language training are especially important (Foster, 2000). Stroh and Caligiuri (1998) as well as Kramer, et. al., (2001) support this argument by explaining that expatriates are more likely to complete their overseas assignment if they are well prepared, which in turn will lead to the expatriate adjusting more quickly to the foreign environment and therefore becoming more likely to complete their overseas assignment.

In 1985, Mendenhall and Oddo categorised and introduced three skills that are necessary for an expatriate to be successful in a cross-cultural setting:

- 1 The self dimension
- 2 The relationship dimension
- 3 The perception dimension

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The 'self dimension' refers to the skills the expatriate has which enable him/her to be self-effective concerning stress management, mental health and psychological well-being. Bandura (1997), also emphasises that expatriates need to believe that they are able to effectively deal with foreign surroundings. Mendenhall et. al., (1985) add that expatriates need to be personally effective even when they may be experiencing uncertainty. A number of well-known researchers such as Mendenhall et. al., (1985), Black et. al., (1992), Foster (2000) and Kramer et. al., (2001), agree that people with high self-efficacy levels tend to be more persistent in learning new behaviours. Mendenhall et. al., (1985) points out that those particular individuals adjust more quickly to and are more successful in a foreign environment, because they are willing and are persistent in learning new behaviours.

The 'relationship dimension' entails a variety of skills that will enable an expatriate to be able to interact with ease with host nationals (Mendenhall et. al., 1985). In addition, possessing relational skills can decrease the uncertainty related to an unfamiliar environment.

The 'perception dimension' constitutes a range of cognitive abilities that help the expatriate evaluate the new unfamiliar environment. Mendenhall et. al., (1985) believe that the greater the individual's perception skills, the easier it is for them to understand the foreign culture and interpret it correctly. Additionally, perception skills help expatriates understand what appropriate and inappropriate behaviours are. Understanding this aspect is of great importance when working in the UAE.

However, even if expatriates have those three groups of skills, in order to succeed in the UAE they will need to have appropriate cross-cultural training. In 1990, Black and Mendenhall, perhaps two of the best-known researchers in this area, suggested that cross-cultural training programs are necessary and are positively linked to expatriate development and job performance.

Cross-cultural training assists expatriates to enhance their knowledge and skills, which in turn would help the expatriates participate in an unfamiliar host country and be more productive (Brewster and Pickard, 1994; Kealey and Protheroe, 1996; Harris and Brewster, 1999). According to Black et. al., (1990) there is strong evidence that suggests that cross-cultural training is a critical factor in the preparation of expatriates

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on their overseas assignments. Tung (1979) also suggests that the best and most effective cross-cultural training would have to be specific and should focus on a particular population and situation. For this reason, it would be logical for Australian companies and organisations to provide their employees who will be working in the UAE with specific cross-cultural training that deals in detail with the UAE population and project management issues.

This cross-cultural program would have to focus exclusively on the UAE culture, religion, and on how to practice project management in the UAE. In addition, this training would have to cover laws in the UAE, leadership and ethics. Emiratis take business personally, so it makes sense to learn as much as possible about the host country's culture in order to be able to avoid misunderstandings and conflict.

There are three phases of expatriate training: the pre-departure phase, the on-site phase and the repatriation phase (Dunbar and Katcher, 1990). Many researchers in the area of cross-cultural studies agree that in order for expatriates to succeed in their overseas assignments they should have either pre-departure and/or on-site training (Tung, 1982; Black et. al., 1990; Adler and Bartholomew, 1992; Weaver, 1998; Gudykunst, Guzley and Hammer, 1996; Ferraro, 1998; and Caligiuri et. al., 2001).

Table 2.4 below summarises some of the cross-cultural training methods that are widely recommended by both academic researchers and human resources practitioners.

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**Table 2.4 Different training methods**

Researcher	Year	Training Method
Brislin	1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cognitive</li> <li>▪ Affective</li> <li>▪ Behavioural</li> </ul>
Tung	1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Didactic Training</li> <li>▪ Cultural Assimilation</li> <li>▪ Language Training</li> <li>▪ Sensitivity Training</li> <li>▪ Field Experience</li> </ul>
Gertsen	1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conventional Training</li> <li>▪ Experimental Training</li> <li>▪ Focus on the General Culture</li> <li>▪ Focuses on Specific Culture</li> </ul>
Black and Mendenhall	1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review of Empirical Studies</li> <li>▪ Cross-cultural training is associated with feelings of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Well-being</li> <li>▪ Self-confidence</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Development of appropriate behaviours in the contact of foreign culture</li> <li>▪ Improvement of appropriate behaviours with host country nationals</li> </ul>
Hammer and Martin	1992	Concluded that both Tung's (1981) and Black and Mendenhall's (1990) training methods had a positive effect on managerial performance
Pruegger and Roger	1994	Found through a qualitative study that interpersonal methods are more effective than didactic programs
Maxin and Panaccio	2002	Experimental types of training

Source: Author, 2010

There are various methods in cross-cultural training programs and Odenwald's (1993) findings reveal that training programs could be classified into six overlapping types:

- 1 Country-specific training
- 2 Cultural awareness
- 3 Multicultural communication
- 4 Language courses
- 5 Executive development
- 6 Host country workforce training



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Cross-cultural training is important and effective in preparing expatriates for their overseas assignments as well as helping them succeed in the UAE. The preparation of expatriates will enhance that person's capability to successfully work and deal with foreign environments (Zakaria, 2000). In addition, it should be pointed out that adequate expatriate preparation can reduce or even prevent expatriate failure (Giacolane and Beard, 1994).

The cross-cultural training should be specifically chosen to match the type of assignment the expatriate has to perform. The chosen training program should also be subject to two determinant factors; the degree of similarity between the individual's home culture and the host culture, and the interaction between the expatriate and the host nationals (Seymen, 2006). According to Black et. al., (1992) those are linked to the role and function of the expatriate.

However, despite all the positive outcomes associated with cross-cultural training, many companies do not prepare expatriates for their UAE assignments. In some cases, companies provide only minimal training. The training currently provided is often incomplete, insufficient or simply non-existent (Brewster, 1995; Selmer, 2002). Even though any training is better than no training at all, according to researchers in this field (Bird, 2001; Selmer, 2002; Vance et. al., 2002) the cross-cultural training supplied by companies is still insufficient. Foster (2000), argues that even though cross-cultural and language training is important, it is very often neglected by companies because they are in a rush to deploy the expatriates.

Vance and Ensher (2002), claim that training for expatriate staff will help expatriates to adjust faster to their new environment. However, like many other researchers in this field, the research undertaken by Vance et. al., (2002) showed that many companies do not train their expatriates for overseas assignments. They believe that the absence of cross-cultural training is due to the fact that some organisations assume that if the manager has proven him/herself in the home country, the manager does not require additional training. Bird (2001), argues that cross-cultural training is necessary to succeed abroad and that the effectiveness of expatriate training can be improved by asking former expatriates for their input and advice. The experience the previous

expatriates have should not be ignored, since it has the potential to improve the cross-cultural training (Selmer, et. al., 2007).

More than 20 years ago, Black and Mendenhall (1989) reviewed 29 studies on cross-cultural training and they stated that cross-cultural training has a positive impact on cross-cultural effectiveness and that it should be offered to potential expatriates. However, according to Brewster and Pickard (1994), many companies still claim that the benefits of cross-cultural training are minimal. Their employees, on the other hand, believe that the training is very helpful in terms of dealing with culture shock and adjustment issues. Forster (2000) stated that many companies either do not offer any type of training or offer training which has a very low quality. Forster (2000), points out that pre-departure training which focuses on cultural briefings is very beneficial for both the potential expatriate and his/her dependants.

Research conducted by Caligiuri, et. al., (2001), suggests that companies should develop more tailored, relevant and realistic pre-departure cross-cultural training programs. Cross-cultural training has the potential of assisting expatriates to adjust to the host country successfully and this in turn would promote successful overseas assignments.

Mentors can help new expatriates make appropriate decisions related to the host country nationals, which in turn will maintain positive relations with the host nationals. Mentors can also provide the new expatriates with critical feedback in a constructive manner, as well as emotional support, coaching, friendship, give them the feeling of acceptance and, if necessary, provide them with counselling.

Bird (2001), believes that the use of case studies and reality-based role-playing can enhance the depth of learning. The training should encompass simulation training with realistic situations, which the expatriates may encounter while overseas.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

If not addressed appropriately many aspects of expatriate life such as cultural differences, lack of knowledge about the UAE business and social standards. As well as differences in leadership styles, can negatively impact and slow down expatriate adjustment. Without appropriate and adequate cross-cultural training, expatriates will

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find it hard to know what leadership style is most appropriate in the UAE, what behaviours are acceptable and which are not and how to conduct business in the UAE. Additionally, project management is a leadership role, and project managers need to be able to effectively motivate and lead their teams. Cross-cultural training plays a vital role in teaching project managers what methods and tools to use to be effective.

This literature review also pointed out that the current cross-cultural training, which is provided some of the time, is insufficient or contains out-dated information. There are a vast number of reasons why cross-cultural training is important. From a company perspective, if their expatriates are adequately trained for the overseas assignment they will be more successful, thus increasing overall efficiency and profitability.

Cross-cultural training helps expatriates to improve and be able to interact effectively with local people and co-workers and it helps expatriates to adjust to an unfamiliar environment faster than if they had no training at all. For developmental and functional reasons successful expatriate assignments are invaluable to companies.

Despite all of the benefits evident in cross-cultural training, commonly expatriates do not receive any cross-cultural training at all. The literature review prompted the researcher to start collecting data initially via an online survey, followed by six case studies. The surveys were the starting-point for this research so that the researcher was able to get up-to-date, accurate and detailed information from Australian project managers working and living in the UAE. Those expatriates know exactly what improvements are necessary, as they all have first-hand experience in working and living in the UAE.

The next chapter (Chapter Three) will explain the methodology in detail and outline step-by-step how the data was collected and analysed.

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## CHAPTER THREE

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### 3 Research Methods Design

The choice of research method influences the way a researcher collects and analyses the data, and as a result this enables and determines the outcome of the research. In the research design stage, the researcher has to decide which method is the most appropriate for the research. This chapter will explain why particular research approaches were chosen and it will show how the data was collected and analysed using both the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

#### 3.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Approach

There seems to be a consensus that research into culture should be based more on qualitative methods than on quantitative, as the area of study is more human, complex and connected. For these reasons, using quantitative methods to study culture appear to have some limitations.

Research is generally predicated on the apparent inaccessibility and depth of the culture, and for this reason it would appear to be logical to use a qualitative approach to gain access to cultural material that otherwise may not be accessed (Schein, 2004). According to Smircich (1983), it is very difficult, if not almost impossible, for standardised measures to tap cultural processes given that, for example, the Arab culture is a characteristic of the UAE people, and they may not be aware of their own culture, unless it is made overt and explicit or they have experienced a new culture (Cameron and Quinn, 1999). Rousseau (1990), explicitly stresses that only certain dimensions of culture can be appropriately studied using quantitative methods and he states “*qualitative assessment of culture is controversial*” (Rousseau, 1990:153). However, Berg (2007:7) states that the “*purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of systematic procedures*”.

Schein (2000, 2004), heavily criticises the quantitative approach used in surveys, believing that it is unethical and that the end results just consist of conceptual categories. However, Schein (1999, 2000) argues that the quantitative approach can be used in assessing the less theoretical levels of culture through intensive observation and

focus interviews. Hence, the deepest levels of culture can be investigated using the qualitative approach. In order to make the end results of this study valid, Sackmann (2001) notes that it is of the highest importance to gain a rich and detailed understanding of the culture and to understand its complexity from an insider's point of view.

However, even the qualitative approach has some weakness. Usually it is limited to specific cases under investigation (Sackmann, 2001). Additionally, the results obtained by using the qualitative approach cannot be generalised to other settings and a direct comparison between the results from other studies cannot be done, unless the research is specifically designed using that same method. The qualitative method can also be very time-consuming and costly (Ott, 1989; Sackmann, 2001).

Advocates of the quantitative approach claim that different levels of culture are embedded in different methods (Tucker, et. al., 1990). Hence, both methods will be used in this thesis, together with the help of the qualitative standardised approach, which will allow the researcher to explain the more shallow layers of culture, which exist and can be measured.

According to Ott (1989), shallower layers of culture are more explicit and can be appropriately studied using a structured quantitative approach. Hence, for this thesis a survey will be used, since it is evident that it can play an important role in a quantitative approach to analyse culture (Rousseau, 1990). In addition, Ott (1989) notes that there are many theoretical questions that simply cannot be addressed unless culture is measured with a reliable and easily administered instrument, which would allow comparability, convenience, systematisation and repeatability of the data, while maximising comparison and precision. Furthermore, the techniques of surveys also allow for the replication of studies and for cross-sectional studies (Tucker et. al., 1990). It should also be noted, that those methods can analyse data through the use of multivariate statistical techniques (Ashkanasy, et. al., 2000). According to Berg (2007:7), *“analysis of qualitative data allows researchers to discuss in detail the various social contours and processes human beings use to create and maintain their social realities”*. This approach reflects the subtlety and complexity that analyses of culture brings.

Rousseau (1990), states that the more explicit layers of culture can be studied using a qualitative approach, but in order to obtain an exact picture of the culture, the culture needs to be studied more deeply, and this is where the quantitative method comes in (Schein, 1992).

### 3.2 Mixed Method Design ~ Multiple Case Studies and Surveys

Mixed methods research uses more than one research method. Those methods share the same research questions to collect complementary data and to conduct comparisons. It was decided that in this research multiple case studies should be used as the evidence from multiple case studies is more compelling and the overall case studies are considered more robust than if the investigator was using only one case study (Abowitz and Michael-Toole, 2010). Case studies should follow a ‘replication’ design, and in most situations approximately six cases are sufficient ‘replication’ to convince readers of a general phenomenon and to provide sufficient data for the research.

However, there are some limits when undertaking multiple case studies. They are very time-consuming and they require extensive resources.

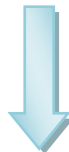
The reason a mixed methods research was used for this thesis is because, by using more than one method the researcher is able to address broader research questions. Studies using more than one research method are more difficult to execute, but as a result are more compelling and robust.

According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:17), mixed methods research is a “*class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study*”.

A case study within a survey:

Surveys of 100 Australian project managers working in the UAE (and Middle East)

(more quantitative)



Six case studies of Australian project managers working in the UAE

(more qualitative)

The 100 Australian project managers were selected randomly. First the researcher looked for Australian organisations operating in the UAE. The next step was to contact those organisations; this was done by emailing the human resource (HR) managers. The researcher explained the nature of the research and asked HR managers if they and the employees working for that organisation would be willing to participate in the study. The HR managers then emailed the survey to Australian project managers in the UAE working for their organisations.

Additionally, when the researcher conducted interviews with CEOs they too offered to help by asking their Australian project managers to complete the survey. Hence, without the help of CEOs and HR managers, the response rate of 72% would not have been achieved, especially for such a long questionnaire.

### **3.3 Qualitative Research**

According to Myers (2009), qualitative research methods were originally developed for the fields of social sciences so that researchers in this area could study social and cultural phenomena. Berg (2007:3), states that “*qualitative research deals with meanings, concepts, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things, in turn quantitative research refers to the count and measures of things*”.

Some examples of qualitative methods are action research, ethnography and case study research. The case study research method is considered to be the most appropriate to answer these research questions and is the preferred method to be applied in this thesis.

The literature suggests that when it comes to dealing with different cultures and societies, qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research, can help researchers gain a deeper understanding of people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live. For this reason, the case study method is considered to be appropriate and it constitutes a compelling method for this type of research.

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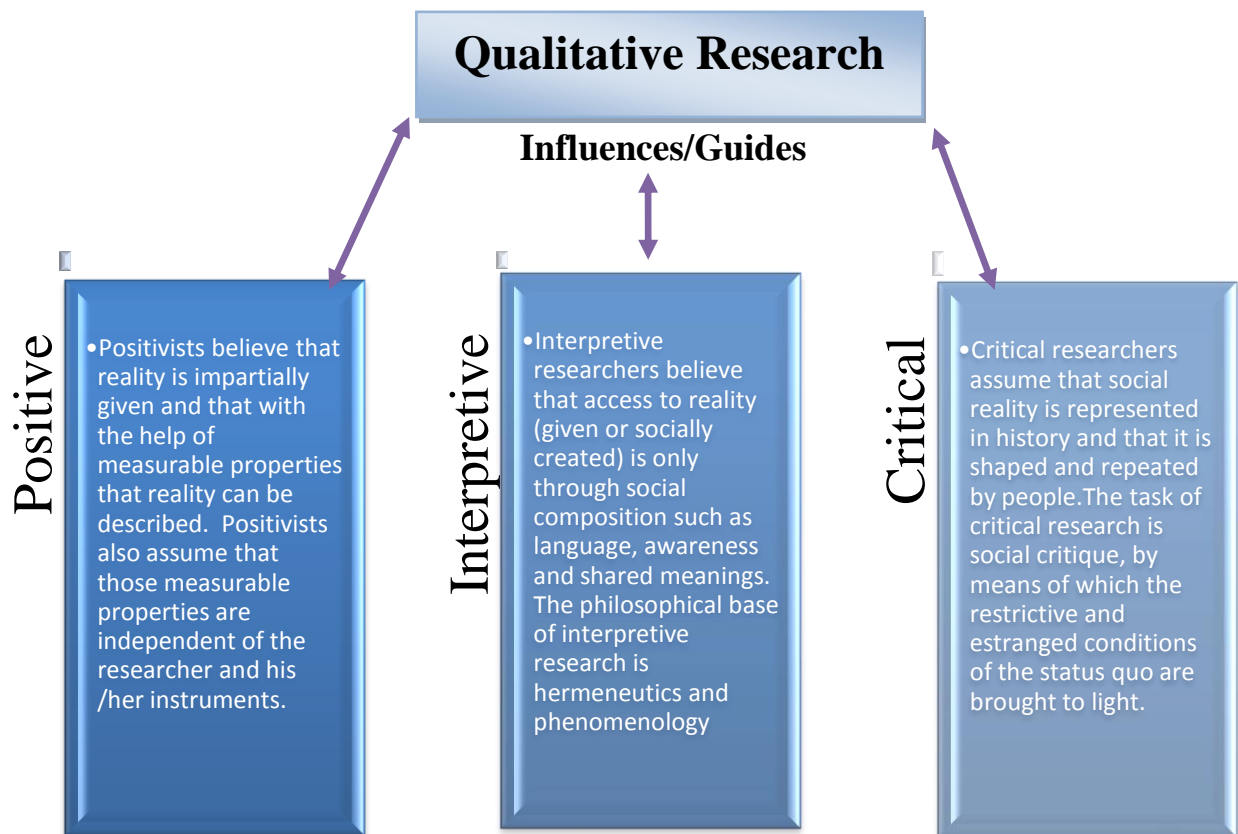
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The case study method is not a single unified system, but in the literature it can be identified as one of three philosophical perspectives:

- 1 Positive (Yin, 2004)
- 2 Interpretive (Elden and Chisholm, 1993; Walsham, 1993)
- 3 Critical (Clark, 1972; Carr and Kemmis, 1986)

These are illustrated and summarised in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1**      **Types of Qualitative Research**



Source: Yin, 2009:3-60.

### 3.3.1 Qualitative Research Methods

According to Myers (2009), a research method is an investigative approach that moves from a fundamental theoretical hypothesis to a research design and data collection. The way a researcher collects data is influenced by the choice of research method they are using. This means that specific research methods involve different skills, assumptions



and research practices. For the purpose of effectively and accurately completing this thesis, the case study research method was adopted as the best means of collecting data for analysis.

The phrase ‘case study’ has various meanings. The case study method can be used to depict a research method or a unit of analysis. For the purposes of this research, the case study approach was used as the research method.

According to Moore (2006:12), “*research methods are no more than the tools of the trade*”. He goes on to stress, that it is important to know the different research methods available and to understand how they work. In addition to this, it is also important to know their weaknesses, strengths, advantages and disadvantages. Moore (2006), also points out that it is possible to add extra dimensions to the research project by combining research methods.

In addition to case studies, this thesis proposes to have a quantitative dimension through the use of surveys of a large sample of project managers and executives. In-depth interviews provide more detailed case study data and information to corroborate and expand the survey data. The case study interviews provide the means to verify and triangulate the data (Schein, 2000, 2004; Yin, 2003).

Questionnaire surveys are the most commonly used form of research method according to Moore (2006). These surveys can be designed in such a way that they combine both open and closed questions. The closed questions provide the quantitative data and the open questions provide a stronger element of qualitative data.

The advantages of questionnaires are that they are fairly cheap; they are relatively flexible and can be used to reach a great number of people. The questionnaire which was designed for the purpose of this thesis also provides a strong degree of anonymity, and the way it is structured in a consistent format leaves little possibility for bias. The survey is impersonal and avoids some of the problems that usually develop during the dealings between an interviewer and a respondent. Before any research was conducted, approval from the Bond University Ethics committee was received. The ethics approval letter and other details can be found in Appendix A. Research ethics concerns itself with what is wrong and right about the research. Informed consent was obtained from every

participant and all the participants' names and any other type of information has been kept anonymous and confidential.

See Appendix B for details of the questionnaire/survey.

Using questionnaires to obtain research data does have disadvantages. The main disadvantage of questionnaires, according to Yin (2009), is that they can be superficial and lack qualitative depth. This is why six case studies were used as well as the collected complementary questionnaire data.

### 3.4 The Quantitative Technique

Hofstede (1980) is one of the highly regarded cultural researchers and he successfully surveyed *IBM* employees for his research into cross-cultural workplace behaviour. His research is recognised worldwide and he used surveys to conduct research into culture. This thesis used a similar approach, and it was influenced by Hofstede's (1980) data-collection method and the strength, thoroughness, and innovativeness of his work, ideas and methodology. The data collection commenced using an online questionnaire, which was based on information and facts gained from the literature review (Oppenheim, 1992).

Australian project managers were the target for the questionnaire survey. Since only Australian project managers were questioned, the survey was given in English. The questionnaire was designed to discover if Australian project managers working in the UAE received any training prior to their departure to the UAE. In addition, the survey asked about culture, about basic demographics of the participants, about their experiences and sought their advice on a number of issues (see Appendix B).

Below are some examples of the survey questions, which include both quantitative and qualitative questions.

Example of quantitative questions:

*How old are you?*

*How many years have you worked in the UAE?*

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The qualitative questions were generic questions, where the expatriates were asked to write a couple of paragraphs on a particular area of interest.

Examples of qualitative questions:

*Does your company prepare expatriates to work in the UAE before they start work?*

*Do you think it would be beneficial to prepare expatriates for the UAE business climate?*

*How are project managers trained?*

*What methods are used to train expatriates?*

*If cross-cultural training were to be provided to you, what do you think should the training encompass?*

This survey was developed using the online survey template, ‘SurveyMonkey’. This software helped with the collection of the survey and it assisted with the analyses of the results. However, as pointed out by researchers such as Moore (2006) and Yin (2009), some critical characteristics cannot be successfully captured in a survey and this is why in addition, to the online based survey, data was also collected by using six cases studies. The questionnaire was designed to find out if Australian project managers working in the UAE received any cross-cultural training prior to their departure to the UAE and if they received any on-site training. Additionally, the survey asked questions concerning UAE culture, the basic demographics of the participants, and their experiences as expatriates and sought their advice on a number of issues. The survey was very helpful in identifying a gap and providing the researcher with useful and rich feedback on what cross-cultural training Australian expatriates need. Moreover, the survey helped the researcher develop questions for the case study interviews.

Surveys were an inexpensive way to gather data from a potentially large number of respondents and were also inexpensive to administer. However, since the administrator has limited control over the surveys’ validity, the results are more reliant on the honesty of the respondent.

### 3.4.1 Sampling

The reason a sample of people was selected was due to the fact that conducting a census of the whole population is unnecessary and time and cost consuming. In fact, in this case, a sample was better than a census of the whole population because the research is only focused on Australian project managers working in the UAE. The whole population of Australian project managers in the UAE at any one time is difficult to estimate, but it is not likely to exceed 250 in total.

For this research a *positive sample* (a sample of people who have certain characteristics such as project management) was selected, because the research is looking at people who have the same characteristics, such as project management skills, and who have the same occupation (Rubin, Rubin, Piele, 2005). The prerequisite for being selected was to be an Australian citizen working as a project manager in the UAE.

The survey targeted 100 Australian (Western) project managers. This is a very high respondent rate (72 out of 100), which provided a good, solid base for the survey analysis. The survey data was collected between 2009 and 2010. Since only Australian project managers were targeted the survey was given in English and there was no need to translate it into Arabic.

### 3.4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Unlike inferential statistics, which test the hypothesis, descriptive statistics are used to study and understand human behaviour(s). According to Trochim (2008), descriptive statistics can give one the basic feature of the data. They provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Together with simple graphics analysis, they form the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data. The data collected from the survey is analysed in detail in Chapters Four and Five.

As stated earlier, this survey had a response rate of 72 out of 100. This means that the survey answers obtained in this research establish both the reliability and validity of the survey.

### 3.4.3 Survey Monkey

The survey questions were developed in relation to the findings from the literature (Oppenheim, 1992). The online survey was designed using the Survey Monkey software. This tool was also used to collect and help with the analysis of the survey data.

The characteristics of the software are:

- Results can be viewed as soon as they are collected. The user can watch live graphs and charts and apply filters to the results;
- Analysis of the individual response level to see the details of particular respondents, or to read the comments from open-ended questions;
- Results can be saved as a *pdf* for offline viewing, or for distributing a ‘hardcopy’ (if needed);
- Generates a public link to the survey results, so that it can be shared with the outside World. Shared reports can even be password protected for extra security;
- Advanced filtering allows for finding patterns in the data. Only people who have responded in the way that the administrator specifies can be made visible in the analysis;
- Summary of the results can be represented in multiple formats, and
- All of the data that is collected remains absolutely private.

### 3.5 Case Study Methods

Once the survey data was analysed and interpreted, it was followed up by six case studies. The researcher decided to conduct case studies, as these can provide very rich and in-depth information about the research topic. In addition, when conducting case study interviews the researcher was able to ask follow-up questions where necessary, which is impossible to do when using an anonymous survey.

Case studies have been used in many studies as a research method, in disciplines such as sociology and business, analysing both individuals and groups (Yin, 2009). This type of research has been used to better understand the complex social phenomena.

Case studies allow researchers to “*retain the holistic and meaningful characteristic of real-life events*” (Yin, 2009:4), such as group behaviour, organisational and managerial processes.

According to Hedrick, et. al., (1993), questions that ask ‘what’, ‘who’ and ‘where’, should use surveys, whereas ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions favour the case study method, since these questions are more explanatory. Yin and Davis (2007), believe that researchers should use a case study method when trying to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth. It should be noted that the case study method is not only limited to qualitative research, but can also be a mix of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell, 2007).

Case study research is a comprehensive research strategy that includes the development of a theoretical model, a research design model, data collection and the analysis of that data. Yin (2003), states that “*the case study inquiry copes with technically distinctive situations in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points...it relies on multiple sources of evidence...benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis*”(Yin, 2009:219). Selecting the cases serves as perhaps the most critical step in doing case study research (Stake, 1994). Gomm, et. al., (2000:111), emphasise that the selection of the cases ought to be vigilantly carried out depending on whether the researcher anticipates to argue “*significant likely dimensions of heterogeneity of a population*”, or to grant evidence “*in support of claims that the case(s) studied are typical or atypical in relevant aspects*”. The process of selecting the cases hides some common problems that can be overcome with adequate thought and effort (Yin, 1994).

Following the author’s doctorate confirmation, the panel also suggested that the case study-based approach was the best methodology to adopt for this particular thesis. After deciding to use the case study method, it was determined that six companies, based in the UAE and Australia should be explored. The six cases for this thesis were selected

based on the fact that they would be exemplary cases on what the significant cross-cultural characteristics of both UAE and Australian project managers.

The choice between whether a single case study is chosen or multiple case studies is a function of the principal goal of the research. Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that many shortcomings associated with case study research can be mitigated by multiple case study research compared to single case study research.

According to Grunbaum (2007), the case study approach has been used for several decades. However, it has only gained a firmer foothold during approximately the last 35 years (Grunbaum, 2007). The case study approach has been adopted by researchers from an array of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history, construction management, economics, medicine and urban planning. This is due to the fact that when compared to other research methods, the case study method has the strength, reliability and ability to examine in-depth cases within a real-life context (Yin, 2004).

There are many definitions of a case study. Gomm, Hammersley and Foster (2002), define case studies as research that investigates a few cases in considerable depth. For the purpose of this thesis, the classic definition by Yin (1994) is considered one of the better definitions and will be used. Yin (1994:13), defines a case study as *“an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident...and relies on multiple sources of evidence”*.

Scholars may not all agree on the definition of case study, but most do agree that a case study is not a particular method of research, rather a strategy for gaining the necessary data and information (Stoecker, 1991; Yin 1994). Yin argues that a case study should not be confused with a significant pure approach to qualitative research (Yin, 2009). According to scholars, a case study can utilise the best of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Stoecker, 1991; Yin, 1994; Stake, 2000).

Stoecker (1991), suggests that case studies permit researchers to explore different outcomes of wide-ranging processes suggested by theories depending on the different circumstances. Stake (1995), defines a case as *a bounded system*, which has working parts. Yin (1994:13), alternately, defines the case study as an all-inclusive research

strategy that deals with circumstances *“in which there will be more variables of interest than data points...relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to be converged in a triangular fashion...benefits from the prior developments of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis”*.

According to Eisenhardt (1989), case study research can involve only quantitative data, only qualitative data, or both. Eisenhardt (1989:538), goes on to say that *“...the combination of data types can be highly synergetic”*. Mintzberg (1979:587), describes this synergy as *“...systematic data creates the foundation for our theories, it is the anecdotal data that enables us to do the building...we uncover all kinds of relationships in our hard data, but it is only through the use of this soft data that we are able to explain them”*. This thesis focuses on culture, and Rousseau (1990:153-192) clearly explains that only definite dimensions of culture may be appropriately studied using quantitative methods, although he reminds us that *“qualitative assessment of culture is controversial”*.

Additionally, Schein (2000, 2004) heavily criticises the quantitative approach used in surveys, believing that it is unethical and that the end result simply provides conceptual categories with no depth. However, Schein (1999, 2000), does argue that the quantitative approach can be used in assessing the less theoretical levels of culture through intensive observation and focused interviews. Hence, the deepest levels of culture should be investigated using the qualitative approach. In order to make the end results of this study valid, Sackmann (2001) notes that it is of highest importance to gain a rich and detailed understanding of the culture and to understand its complexity from an insider's point of view.

Advocates of the quantitative approach claim that different levels of culture are embedded in different methods (Tucker, et. al., 1990). Therefore, this thesis research involved both approaches: qualitative for the depth as well as quantitative methods, for the conceptual categories (Schein, 2000). The exceptional strength of case studies is their ability to deal with a diversity of evidence collected from in-depth interviews, documents, surveys and observations.

For the purposes of this thesis, the selection of six companies that have expatriate Western project managers working for them allowed the researcher to control some of



the environmental variations. For example, since only Australian project managers were targeted the survey was given in English and there was no need to translate it into Arabic. Additionally, focusing on large corporations allowed some variation and variety due to size differences (but not excessive ones) among the companies. According to the research carried out by Pettigrew (1988), the specifications focused on a particular population. In the case of this thesis, the focus was on expatriate Western project managers, and this reduced many extraneous variations and provided the potential to clarify the range (the field) of the findings.

### 3.5.1 Case Study Types

As mentioned earlier, Yin (1993) lists several examples of the use of case study methodology along with the appropriate research design in each case. He defines three different types of case studies. Depending on the type of the research question, the three types of case study are exploratory, explanatory and descriptive.

In an *exploratory* case study, Yin (2009) suggests that if the research is mainly focused on ‘what’ questions then the exploratory case study approach should be used. In the exploratory case study, the framework of the study has to be created ahead of time, but the fieldwork and data collection can be undertaken prior to the definition of the research question and hypothesis, if needed.

According to Yin (2009), the *explanatory* case study deals with ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions. This type of case study is appropriate for causal studies. In addition, explanatory case studies are very useful in very complex cases; where the analysis can make use of pattern-matching techniques.

A *descriptive* case study is a descriptive theory, where the object or phenomenon is not only its external appearance but also its internal structure are described. Its main focus is on covering in depth the scope, background information and accurate description of the case in question (Yin, 1994).

### 3.5.2 Designing Case Studies

According to Eisenhardt (1989), it is important to define the research question since the rationale for defining the research question is the same as in hypothesis testing research. Having a defined research question ensures that the research is focused and one is less likely to become overwhelmed by the volume of data.

Case studies can be either single or multiple case designs. If there is only one case available for research, the researcher could not replicate that case so they would be limited to the single case design. Understandably, multiple case-designs can reinforce the results by replicating the pattern matching; this logically would increase the strength of the theory.

For the purpose of this research, multiple-case designs will be used. Multiple cases also allow the data to be checked by triangulation (Noor, 2008). According to Stoecker (1991:109), a *“case study is the best way by which we can refine general theory and apply effective interventions in complex situations”*. Additionally, Walton (1992) claims that case studies are likely to produce the best theory.

### 3.5.3 Research Design

The case study method is an empirical research method and as such it has an implicit, if not explicit, research design. The research design is a logical sequence that connects the initial research question to the empirical data. Another way of looking at it is that the design *“guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting. It is a logical model of proof that allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning casual relations among the variables under investigation”* (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992:77-78). Philliber, et. al., (1980:135), defined the research design as a *“blueprint”* that deals with at least four issues: what question to study; what data is relevant; what data to collect, and how to analyse the results. The research plan’s main purpose is to avoid situations in which the evidence that has been collected in a case study does not pertain to the initial question; hence, the design is much more than just a work plan.

### 3.6 Qualitative Techniques for Data Collection

In general, many case study researchers mainly use interviews and documentary materials without using participant observation (Meyers and Newman, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). For the purposes of this research, the participants in the case studies were interviewed and the interviews were recorded onto a tape recorder. After every finished interview the ‘snowballing’ method was used to extend the sample. This involved asking each interviewee if there is anyone they know who would be useful for this research, so that the researcher could also interview those individuals (Green, et. al., 2010).

Next, the taped interviews were transcribed, ready for analysis.

#### 3.6.1 Analysing Case Studies

According to Eisenhardt (1989:539), “*analysing data is the heart of building theory from case studies, but it is both the most difficult and the least confident part of the process*”. To date, this feature of the case study methodology is the least developed and therefore the most intricate. The reality is that case studies produce a staggering volume of data and Pettigrew (1988) believes that researchers have to be conscious because there is a hazard of ‘death by data asphyxiation’ for researchers.

Thankfully, researchers such as Yin (1994) and Stake (1995) have come up with some strategies that should lead one to produce an analysis of the highest quality. To achieve this, Yin’s (2009) four principles are:

- Show that the analysis utilised all the relevant evidence;
- Include all major rival interpretations in the analysis;
- Address the most significant aspects of the case study, and
- Use the researcher’s prior expert knowledge and apply it to future analysis.

In addition to this, Yin (1994) and Stake (1995) both present similar ideas on *pattern-matching*. Stake (1995), identifies the issues more clearly at the analysis phase by coding the data. He went on to recommend ‘categorical arrangements’ as another means of analysis. Furthermore, Stake (1995) suggests that a researcher carrying out a case

study analysis should develop protocols for this stage of the case study to increase the quality of research.

Case study research has been criticised because of its possible researcher subjectivity, and for this reason constructing validity is often problematic (Yin, 1994). In addition, the validity of the case study depends “*not only on the typical representativeness of the case but upon the cogency of the theoretical reasoning*” (Mitchell, 1983:207).

### **3.6.2 Cross Case Analysis**

Eisenhardt (1989), points out that case analysis is a cross-case search for patterns. She explains that people notoriously process information poorly, and for that reason using cross-case analysis as a research tactic avoids that problem. This approach was used in this research because the investigator wanted to avoid premature conclusions and a cross-case comparison was used to counteract this tendency as it forced the researcher to look at the data in different ways. Additionally, the analysis and results of these comparisons could lead to new concepts which the researcher did not anticipate.

In operational terms, this could be achieved by selecting pairs of cases and then listing the similarities and differences between each pair. In the case of this research, this was done by comparing the companies that prepare their workers for overseas assignments with those that do not. This tactic literally forced the investigator to look at the similarities and differences between the cases.

### **3.6.3 Case study Validity**

According to Kidder and Judd (1986), there are four tests to prove validity of a case study. The first one is to construct validity and this is done by using multiple sources of evidence. This has been the case in this research. This research has used information gathered from the literature review, the data collected from surveys, as well as the use of multiple case studies. A chain of evidence has been established throughout the surveys and the case studies. In addition to this, to make the constructed validity more robust the draft case study report was reviewed by two supervisors and a key informant.

The second validity test was the internal validity that is not applicable to this case study. As this case study was an exploratory study and this test can be used only on explanatory or causal studies.

The third test was the external validity test, whereby the theory must be tested by replicating the same findings in more cases. This was successfully achieved by replicating the same logic that was used in the first case study theory in multiple case studies, and the same results were realised. Multiple cases help improve external validity, but they also exacerbate problems of data overload.

The fourth and last test was the reliability test and this was achieved by making sure that if the same procedures were followed by a different investigator, the same results would occur. To avoid any potential errors and biases, the case studies have been conducted and documented in as many operational steps as possible. The interviews were all recorded then transcribed and coded (see later in Figure 3.2).

The case study was prepared and designed by first reading the relevant literature and finding a defect or problem, which was the lack of cross-cultural training and preparation Australian project managers receive before being sent to work in the UAE. Next, from the literature review a pilot survey was developed and emailed directly to human resource (HR) managers and project managers working in the UAE. Project managers were surveyed to check if Australian project managers were getting sufficient cross-cultural training, what type of training, and if no training was offered to them, the researcher wanted to find out why was it not provided. Since a project manager (most likely) may not be able to answer why they were not sufficiently cross-culturally trained, their HR managers had to be surveyed for this answer too.

See Appendix C for pilot study results.

The pilot study was well received and the given suggestions and comments were used to develop a 49-question survey, which then was emailed to 100 Australian project managers working in the UEA. The survey consisted of 33 quantitative questions and 16 qualitative questions. The qualitative questions consist of 16 open-ended questions, which were discursive style questions. Once the survey data was collected and analysed, the analysis pointed out clearly that there was hardly any cross-cultural training

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provided to the project managers and most cross-cultural training provided was insufficient. The survey also pointed out that the project managers would like to receive cross-cultural training and most gave suggestions on what the cross-cultural training should cover and in what manner it should be provided. From the survey it was very clear that the training should cover the Arab culture, the religion (Islam) and some basic Arabic language. It should also include laws (the Shariah law and the Labour law) as well as work ethics, team-work and leadership styles. This was useful and interesting as this information also helped the author to return to the literature review and focus it on those identified areas.

Next, the survey data also helped the investigator to develop appropriate and relevant case study questions.

Examples of these questions are given, such as:

*How does the Arab culture influence the practices that Australian project managers should adopt when working in the UAE?*

*Does your company prepare Expatriates to work in the UAE before they start work?*

*Do you think it would be beneficial to prepare Expatriates for the UAE business climate?*

The case studies were similarly structured, and below are a list of a few of the questions that were asked during the interview. The questions included:

*What are the five most important things Expatriates need to know before starting to do business in the UAE?*

*Is it different doing business in the UAE than your home country?*

*What do you think is important to learn about the UAE and the Emirates before starting to do business in the UAE?*

*In your opinion what are the five most critical facts for being successful in business in the UAE?*

*Does your company prepare Expatriates to work in the UAE before they start work?*

*How do you recruit, both who and why?*

These were the open-ended essay style questions that gave the investigator useful information to follow up in the case studies.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used and combined in this research; this enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of the topic. Leicht, et. al., (2010), point out that qualitative research can observe correlations by analysing survey data, but to make the data more valuable it should be supplemented with qualitative information such as interviews. This would help the researcher better understand the topic researched and provide useful feedback and information from the participants. Hence, a mixed method approach has numerous benefits over using quantitative and qualitative methods by themselves.

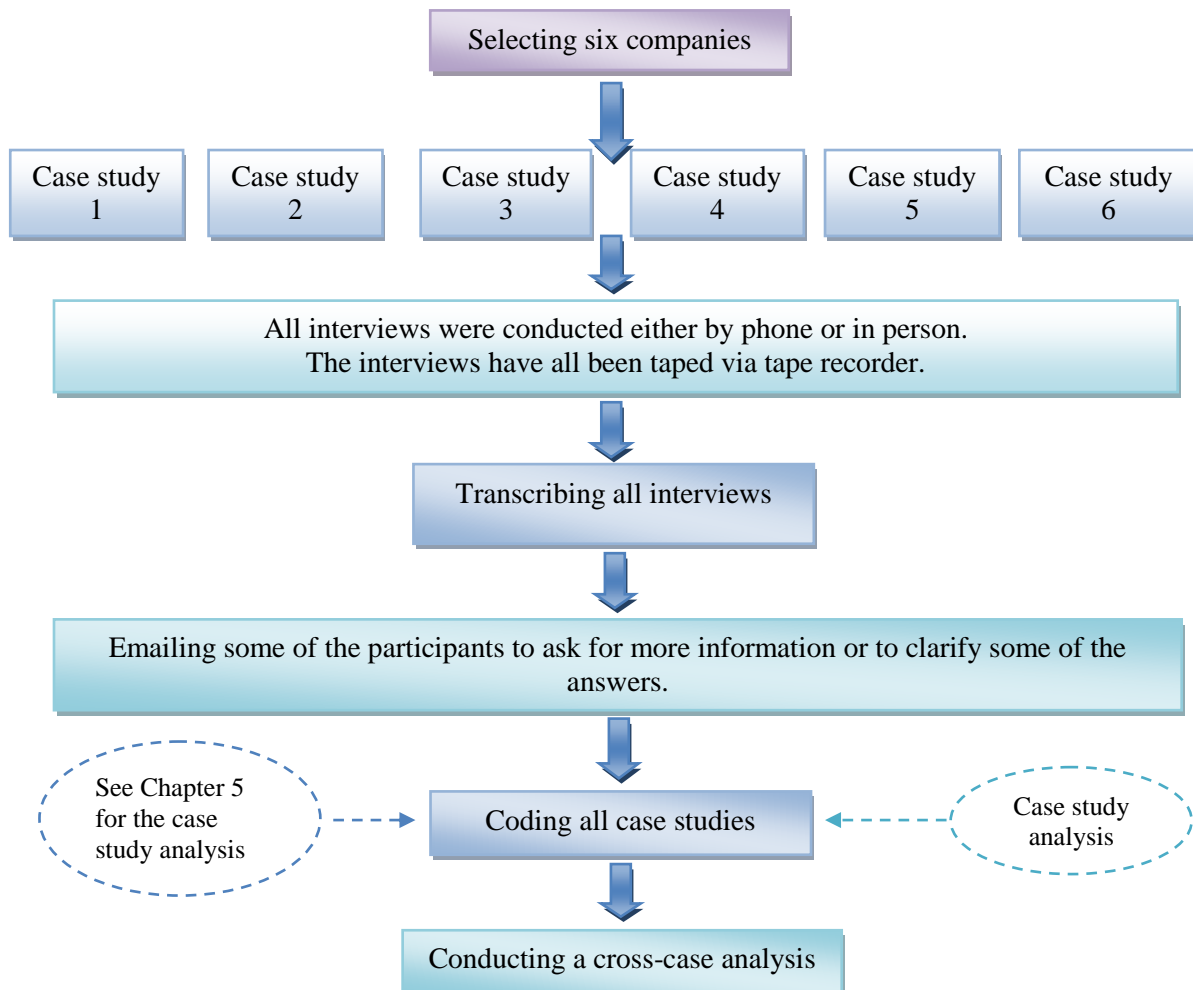
See Appendix D for the raw survey results.

### **3.7 Conducting Case Study Interviews**

First of all, the researcher had to research Australian international companies, which also operate in the UAE. After the potential companies had been selected, the researcher emailed the company's directors and CEOs of the companies. The emails that were sent introduced the researcher and the research and it asked whether the individuals who were emailed would be willing to participate in the study. The emails were received well and most companies were willing to be part of the research.

In some cases, the directors and CEOs were the ones interviewed and in other cases the directors and CEOs recommended employees who were best suitable to answer the questions asked. The 'snowballing' technique was used to extend the sample. This involved the researcher finding additional suitable candidates to interview by asking each interviewee to recommend others who they thought may be useful for this research (Green, et. al., 2010).

**Figure 3.2**      **Conducting Interviews**



Source: Author, 2011

Before any interview was conducted, ethics approval was received and every interviewee signed a letter of consent before the interview commenced.

### 3.8.1 Coding in Case Study Research

According to Berelson (1952:18), content analysis is a “*research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of manifest content of communication*”. This method focuses on the actual content and internal features of an interview. It is a very useful tool for in-depth interviews since this method is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes and phrases within a transcript so that the investigator can quantify their presence in an objective manner.



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In order to be able to conduct a content analysis on the interview, the interview needs to be first transcribed and then broken down in to manageable categories and then examined using content analysis (Thomas, 1994).

Content analysis offers several *advantages* to researchers who consider using it as a research approach for understanding and analysing interviews. In particular, content analysis has the following benefits:

- It looks directly at communication via texts or transcripts, and hence gets at the central aspect of social interaction;
- It can allow for both quantitative and qualitative operations;
- It can provide valuable historical/cultural insights over time, through analysis of texts;
- It allows a closeness to the text which can alternate between specific categories, relationships and also statistically analyses the coded form of the text;
- It can be used to interpret texts for purposes such as the development of expert systems (since knowledge and rules can both be coded in terms of explicit statements about the relationships among concepts);
- It is an unobtrusive means of analysing interactions;
- It provides insight into complex models of human thought and language use, and
- When done well, is considered as a relatively 'exact' research method (based on hard facts, as opposed to *discourse analysis*).

However, the analysis of case studies can be extremely time-consuming in structuring and analysing the transcriptions (texts). This is where dedicated software such as NVivo8 (<http://www.qsrinternational.com/>) and SurveyMonkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>) are very useful and can assist in the process of collecting and analysing data. Both of those softwares have been used in this research.

### 3.8.2 NVivo 8

Nvivo8 is qualitative research software that has been developed to help people to manage, shape and make sense of unstructured information. It is a sophisticated tool that enables information to be analysed easier and faster.

Qualitative research software has been purpose-built for classifying, sorting and arranging information. Hence, this type of software provides the researcher with more time to analyse the materials and discover patterns, identify themes, develop insights and suggest meaningful conclusions.

### 3.9 Research Methods Conclusion

Schein (1999, 2000, and 2004), argued that a quantitative approach can be used in assessing the less theoretical levels of culture through intensive observation and focused interviews. Hence, the deepest levels of culture can be investigated using the qualitative approach. In order to make the end results of this study valid, Sackmann (2001) noted that it is of the highest importance to gain a rich and detailed understanding of the culture and to understand its complexity from an insider's point of view.

Cultural research is generally predicated on the alleged inaccessibility and depth of the culture. For this reason, it would be logical to use a qualitative approach to access cultural material that otherwise may not be accessed (Schein, 2004). According to Smircich (1983), it is very hard, if not almost impossible, for standardised measures to tap cultural processes given that, for example, the Arab culture is unique to the Arab people and they are not aware of their own culture unless it is made overt and explicit, or unless they experience a new culture (Cameron and Quinn, 1999).

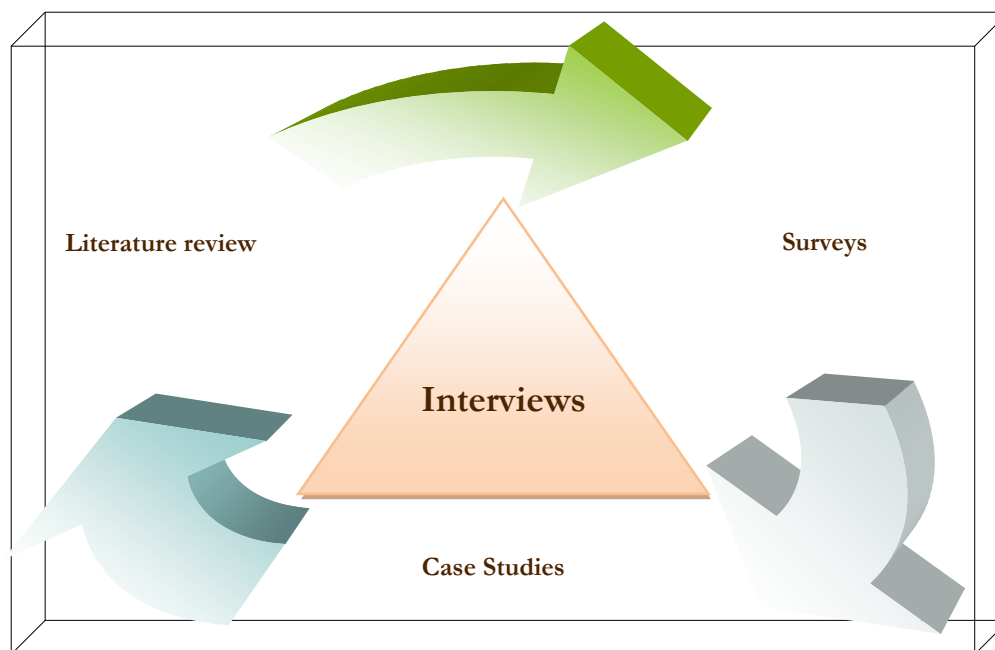
Advocates of the quantitative approach claim that different levels of culture are embedded in different methods (Tucker, et. al., 1990). With the help of a qualitative standardised approach, the more explicit or shallow layers of culture can be measured. To obtain the best data available, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in this research.

In essence, the approach adopted in this research was as follows:

- Literature review (to inform data collection);
- General survey of a specific population (Australian project managers);
- Focused interviews on selected people/organisations, and
- Follow up-emails with additional questions.

Since there are three methods used in this study, a triangulation method was utilised. The triangulation compared the findings and triple-checked the results (Cheng, 2005:75). See Figure 3.3 for the triangulation of these methods.

**Figure 3.3**      **Triangulation of the methods used**



**Source: Author, 2010**

Triangulation occurs when multiple methods are combined within a methodology (Edward-Gibson and Whittington, 2010; Abowitz and Michael-Toole, 2010). The reasons for using a triangulation method are that researchers can be more confident with a result if different methods confirm the same result. Triangulation has been advocated in the construction and project management industry by researchers such as Love, et. al., (2002), Edwards and Holt (2008) and Abowitz et. al., (2010).

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This chapter of the thesis has established and described (in detail) the research methodology that will be used in this thesis. The next Chapter (Chapter Four) will illustrate how the survey data was collected and analysed.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

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### 4 Data Collection

#### 4.1 Background

As indicated in the previous chapter on methodology, two types of data collection approach have been used to conduct the data collection. First, an online survey was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Once the survey data was completed and the questions analysed, the results exposed areas that need to be researched in more depth. This in-depth research has been achieved by conducting a number of case studies.

The case studies were conducted by using semi-structured in-depth interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed and analysed, any areas that needed more information or explanation were noted and the additional information was obtained by contacting the participants via email and asking them the relevant questions. This provided a clear statement of the answers and provided sound documentation for each study.

#### 4.2 Survey Data Collection

Surveys are an economical way to gather data from a potentially large number of respondents as they are fairly inexpensive to administer. This is why surveys are so popular among researchers such as Hofstede (1980), who is possibly one of the highlights regarded cultural researchers. Hofstede surveyed *IBM* employees for his interesting and successful research into cross-cultural work place behaviour. Since Hofstede's research is recognised worldwide and he used surveys to research culture, the research in this thesis will follow a similar approach. The data collection began by using an online questionnaire, the content of which was based on the literature review. Australian project managers were the target for the questionnaire survey. Since only Australian project managers were targeted, the survey was written in English and there was no need to translate it into Arabic. The questionnaire was designed to find out if Australian project managers working in the UAE received any cross-cultural training prior to their departure or on site. In addition, the survey asked about culture, basic

demographics of the participants, their experiences and advice provided by their organisations or colleagues.

This survey also aimed to gain a better understanding and more insights about how the Arab (non-Western) culture influences Australian project managers (Western culture) while working in the UAE.

The results of the survey were useful in providing rich information on cross-cultural project management, as well as helping the researcher develop questions for the case study interviews.

A 49-question survey was developed and then was emailed to 100 Australian project managers working in the UEA. The survey consisted of 33 quantitative questions and 16 qualitative questions. The qualitative questions were open-ended discursive-style questions.

The quantitative questions mainly focused on the demographic queries such as age, gender and nationality. The survey also asked *yes* and *no* questions about cross-cultural training. The qualitative questions were simple questions, where the expatriates were asked to write a couple of paragraphs for their answer.

As noted above, 100 Australian (Western) project managers were targeted in this survey and the survey had 72% valid respondents. This is a very high respondent rate (72 out of 100) which provided good feedback and suggestions which the researcher could refine and use for the case study interviews. The survey data was collected between 2009 and 2010.

### **4.3 Results**

As noted earlier, both the quantitative and the qualitative approaches have some limitations, because neither method can answer all the research questions. However, when used together the individual limitations that the methods have are minimised, if not eliminated completely. The researcher is then left with the best and most accurate picture of the situation. This means that any discussion and recommendations should be complete, accurate and appropriate.

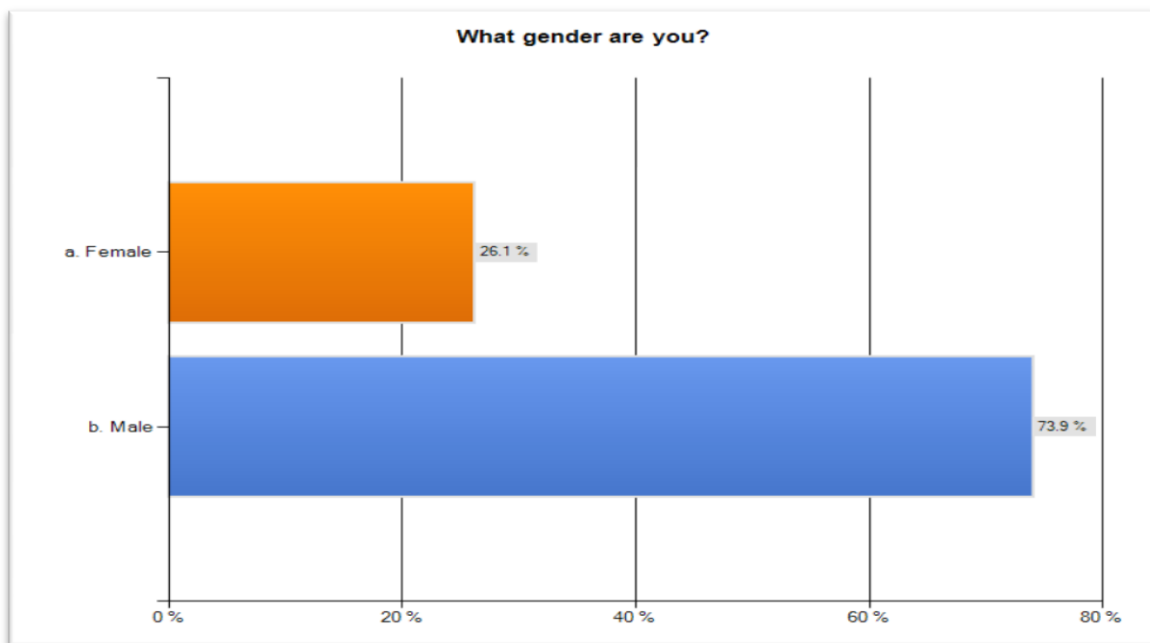
This section now deals with the quantitative survey results. The results will be represented visually in Figures and all the Figures will be analysed and explained.

#### 4.3.1 Survey Results

These first questions consider the background of the respondent and Figures 4.1 to 4.17 summarise those results. The next set of questions looks at the level of education the expatriate has and is summarised in Figures 4.17 to 4.20. The subsequent series of questions summarised in Figures 4.20 to 4.33 consider the Arab culture and the business culture. The last group of questions, which are summarised in Figures 4.33 to 4.37, examine the cross-cultural training and preparation of Australian project managers.

##### *Gender, Age and Nationality*

**Figure 4.1** Gender

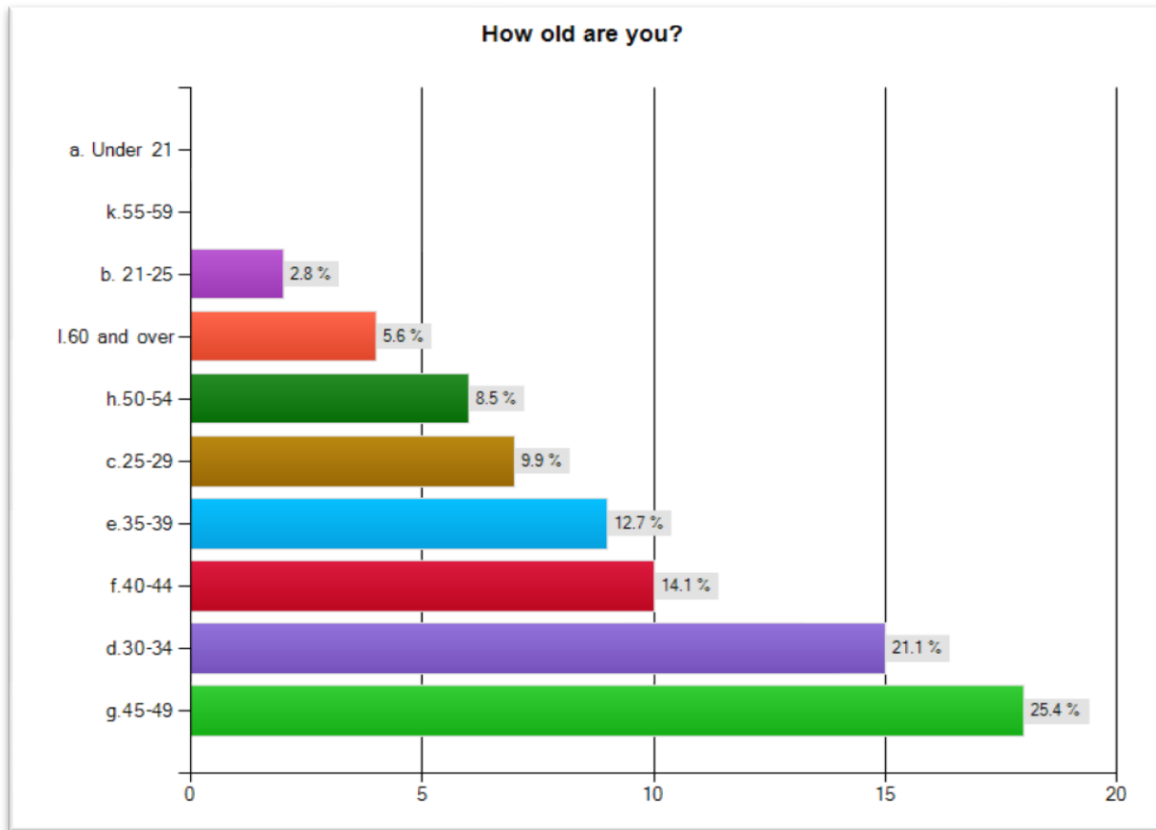


Project management is a male-orientated discipline, so, it is no surprise that there are more project managers who are male as opposed to female.

Figure 4.1 summarises the gender composition of the respondents. Additionally, even though the number of females working in expatriate roles has increased in recent times (compared to 20 years ago), the numbers are still much smaller compared to the male expatriates. The reason why there are 73.9% expatriate males as compared to the 26.1% female expatriates working in the UAE is interesting. It is due to the fact that in the

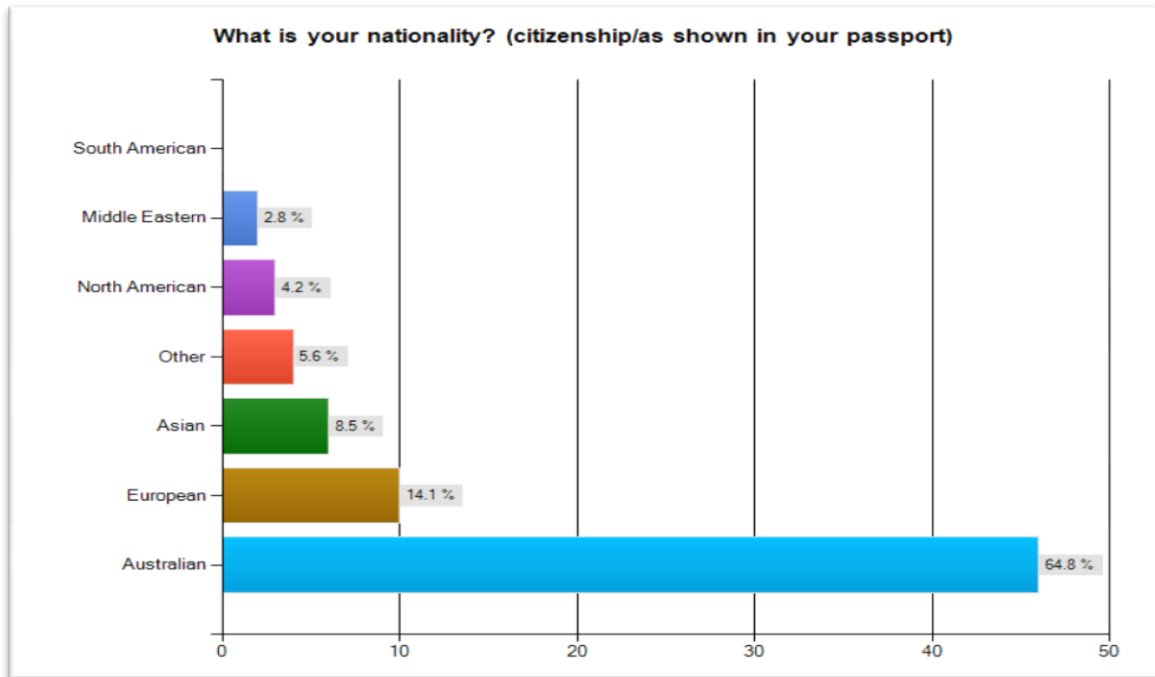
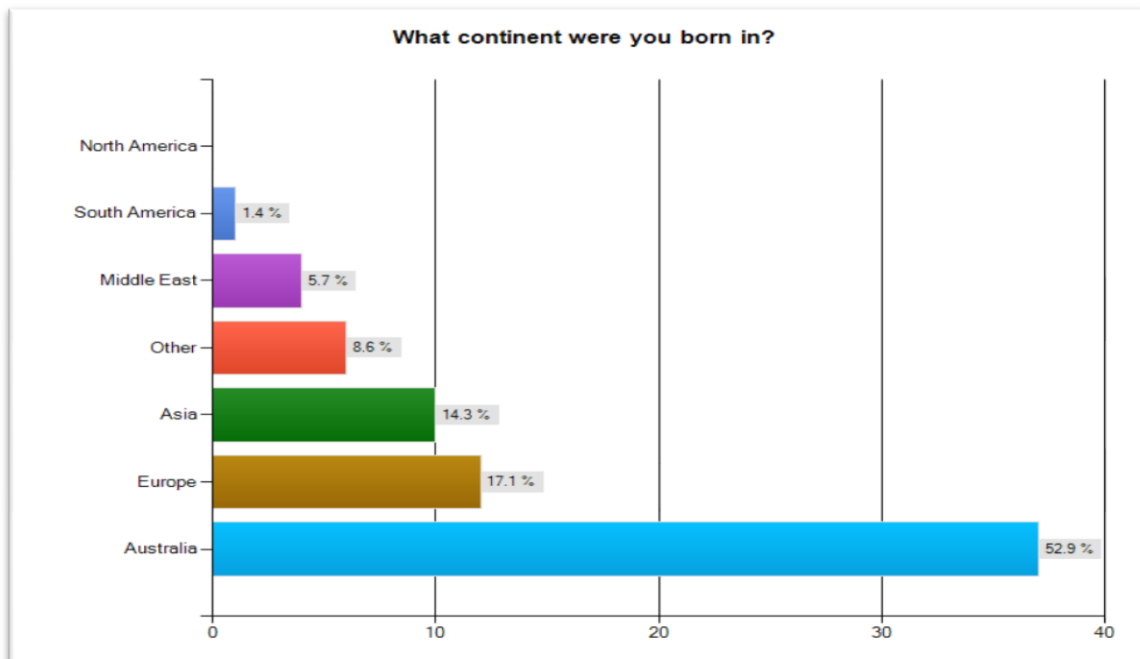
UAE, as an Arab region is male dominated. This too was demonstrated by Hofstede's dimensions.

**Figure 4.2** Age



As shown in Figure 4.2, most (46.5%) participants that completed this survey were between the ages of 45-49 and 30-34. This is due to the fact that, most of them hold positions in senior roles, such as managers and directors and to qualify for the types of position they hold takes time. Being a project manager requires solid experience, and younger people usually are not found in high-ranking managerial positions. This is shown in these statistics, with 53.6% of respondents in the 40+ age group. The second highest age group (33.8%) of total respondents was in the 30-39 range. At this age, respondents are up-and-coming managers gaining the necessary experience in their field.

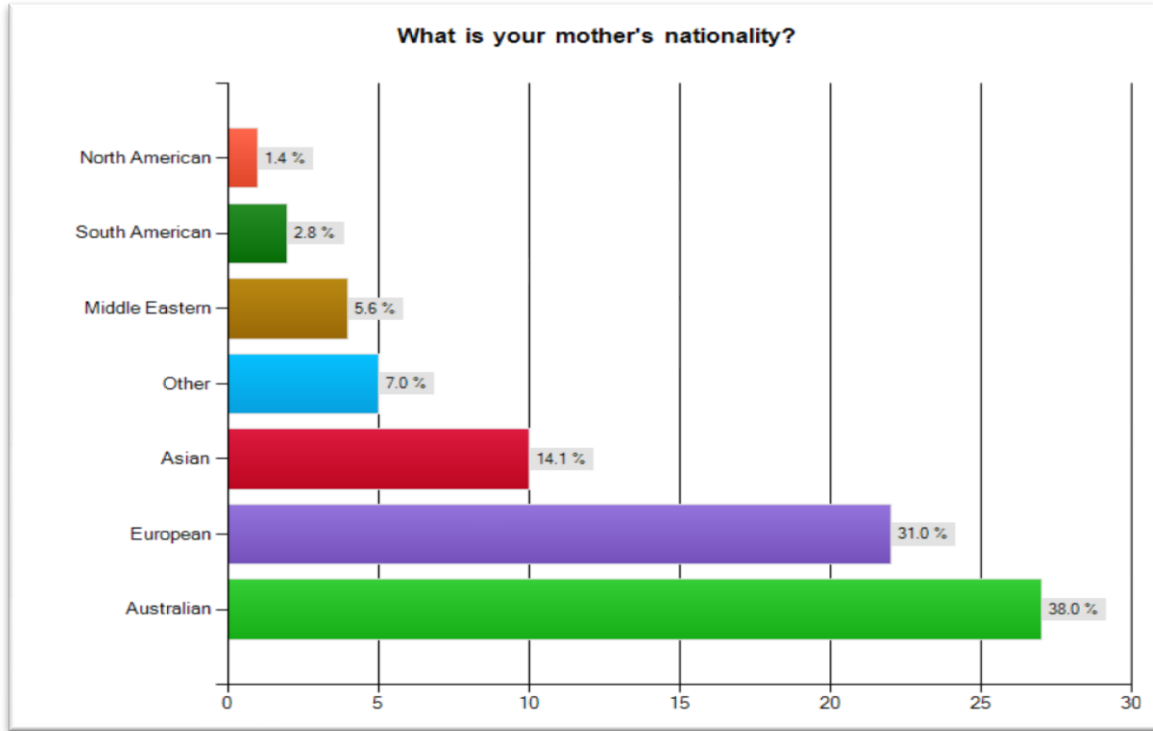


**Figure 4.3**      **Nationality****Figure 4. 4**      **Place of birth**

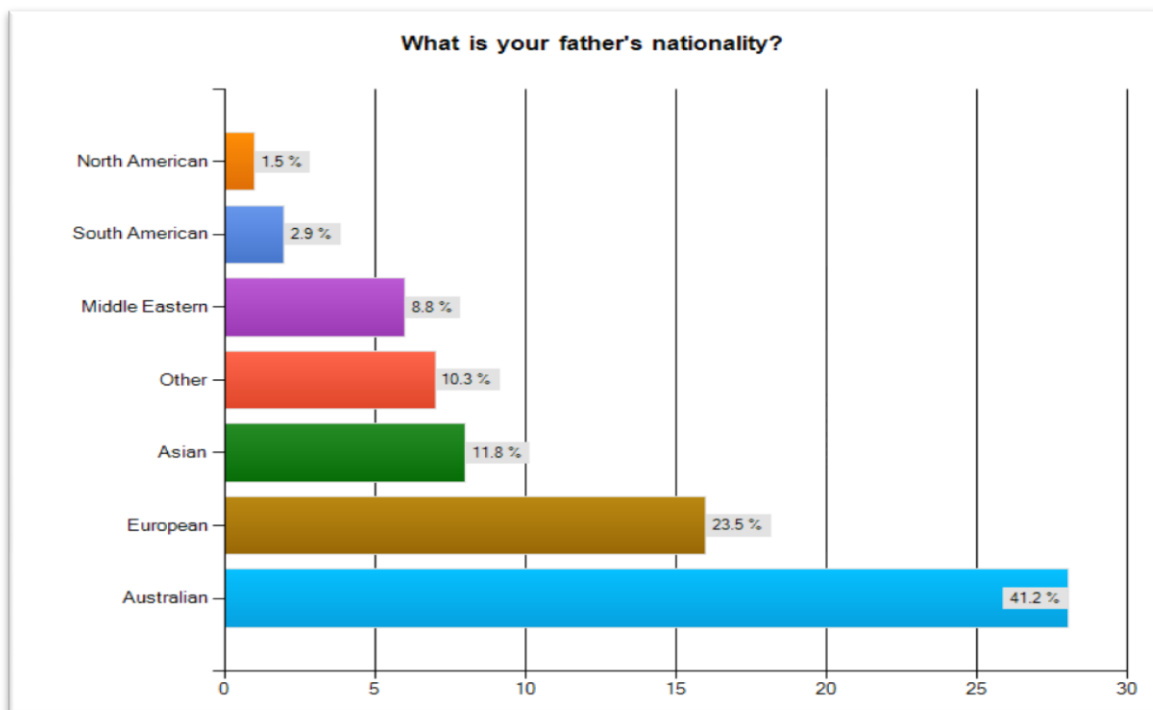
The focus of this survey is on Australian project managers so it is no surprise that a substantial percentage of respondents were born in Australia (64.8%) or were Australian in nationality (52.9%), as illustrated by Figure 4.3 and 4.4. Australians who were born in the Middle East (5.7%) have different needs and requirements than Australians with

other backgrounds. This also means that different nationalities require different cross-cultural training.

**Figure 4.5** Mother's nationality



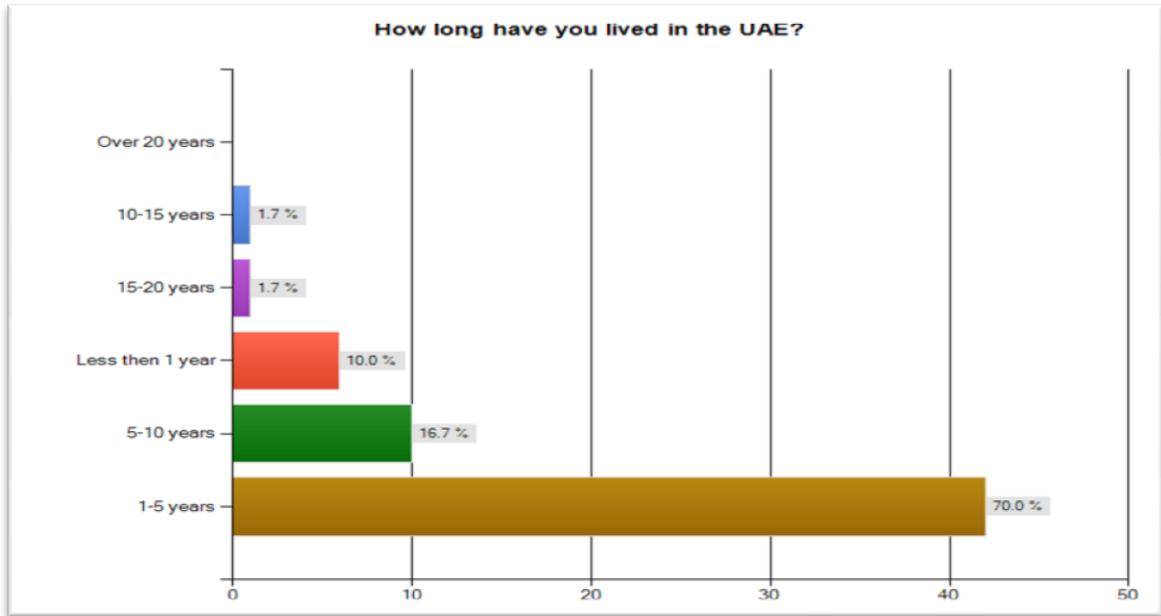
**Figure 4.6** Father's nationality



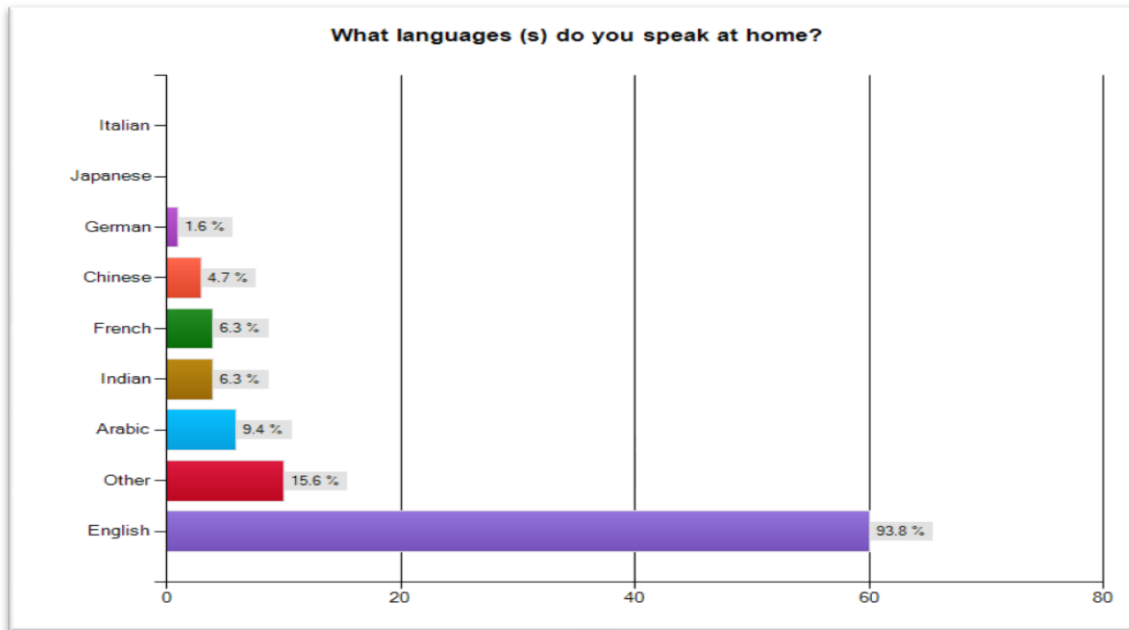
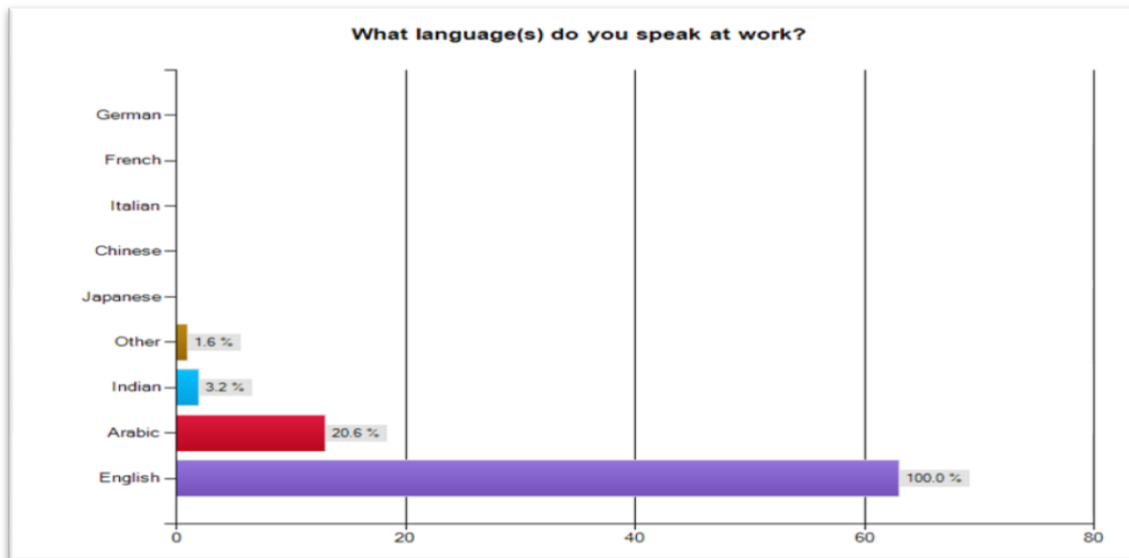
The reason expatriates were asked about their parents' birthplace is because it was believed that by including the family background when studying the expatriate's background it would show what culture the expatriates had grown up in. For example, it is logical that the 8.8% of Australians whose fathers are from the Middle East were able to adapt faster to the culture in the UAE than the 23.5% of expatriates whose fathers are European. This information is useful so that the cross-cultural training provided by companies is appropriate for the individuals who are being trained. For example, an Australian whose parents are originally from the Middle East who knows a lot about Arab culture and speaks Arabic will not require Arabic language training or the basic cultural awareness training, compared to someone whose parents are not from the Middle East and who has limited knowledge of Arab culture and language.

Hofstede (2003) was the first one to identify this as 'cultural dimensions'. Mendenhall and Oddou (1985), also refer to this phenomenon as 'cultural dimensions'. Church (1982) uses the term of *cultural distance* and Tung (1987) recognised the occurrence as *hardness of culture*. Many researchers believe that this cultural distance is negatively linked to cross-cultural adjustment and the more the cultural distance increases the more important the cross-cultural training becomes (Parker and McEvoy, 1993; Gregersen and Stroh, 1997; Waxin, 2000; and Hofstede, 2003).

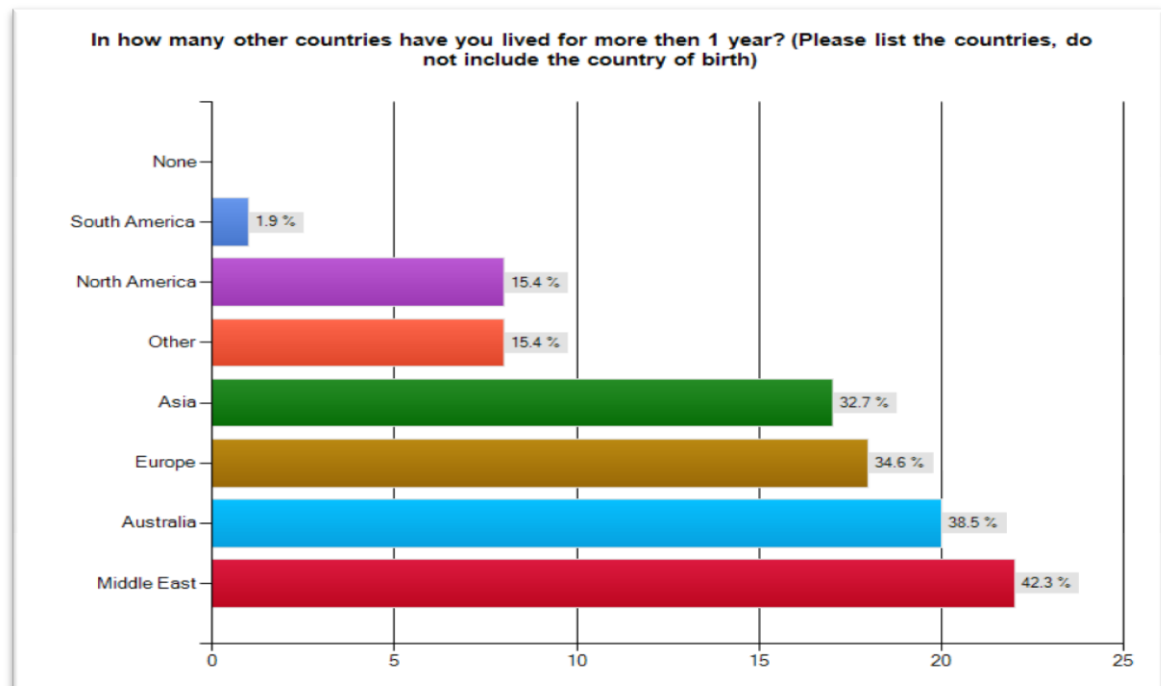
Project management is not solely technical. It is also highly dependent on the people working on those projects. With adequate cross-cultural training, employees have the ability to learn new skills and behaviours and alter their behaviours when necessary. Since people play an important role in every aspect of project management it makes sense to equip them with the necessary tools to perform at their best.

*Residential, History, Language(s) and Previous Residential Locations***Figure 4.7** How long has the expatriate lived in the UAE?

Most expatriates have spent about one to five years in the UAE. There are many reasons for this. As illustrated in the literature review, in terms of cultural, religious, social, ethical, legal and geographical point of views, the UAE is very different from Australia. All of these factors have an impact on the expatriate's decision concerning how long they will stay in the UAE. Also, the time line for many projects is one to two years and many expatriates may only stay for the duration of the project. Interestingly, 20.1% of the group have lived in the UAE for five years or more. This group can be classified as long-term UAE expatriates (see Figure 4.7). Some people choose to stay in the UAE for more than two years for tax purposes, since if an Australian returns back to Australia before two years have passed and then works in Australia, that individual needs to pay tax on the money made overseas as well as in Australia. Additionally, as illustrated in Chapters One and Two, the UAE had many big scale projects running in 2008 and a number of project managers enjoying being part of developing world's most unique buildings, such as the Burj Khalifa (known as Burj Dubai). The experience they gained working on those grand and unique projects was invaluable.

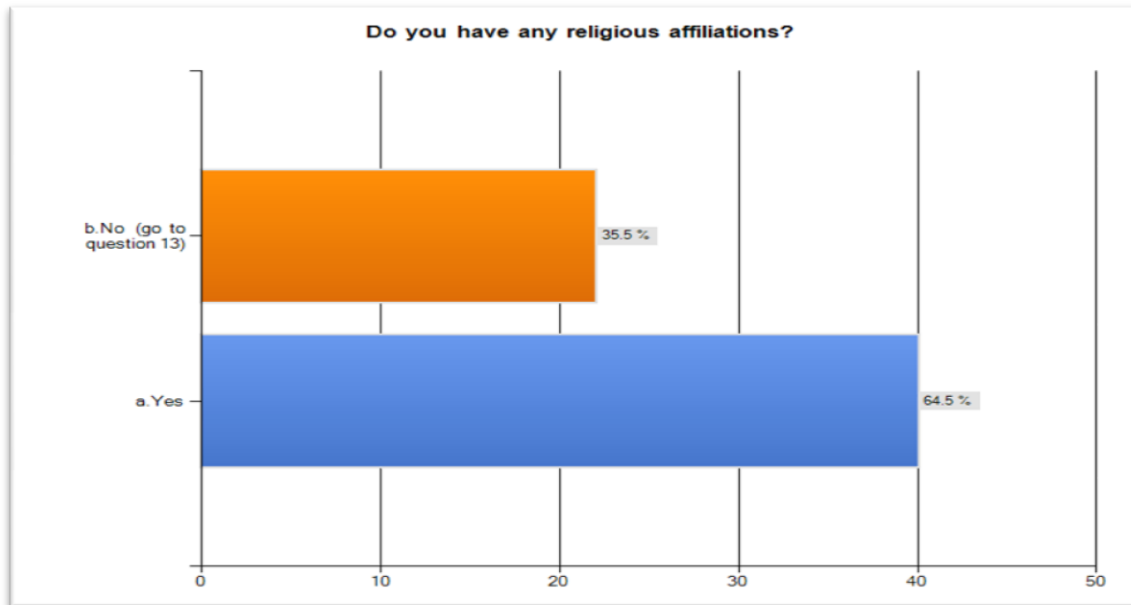
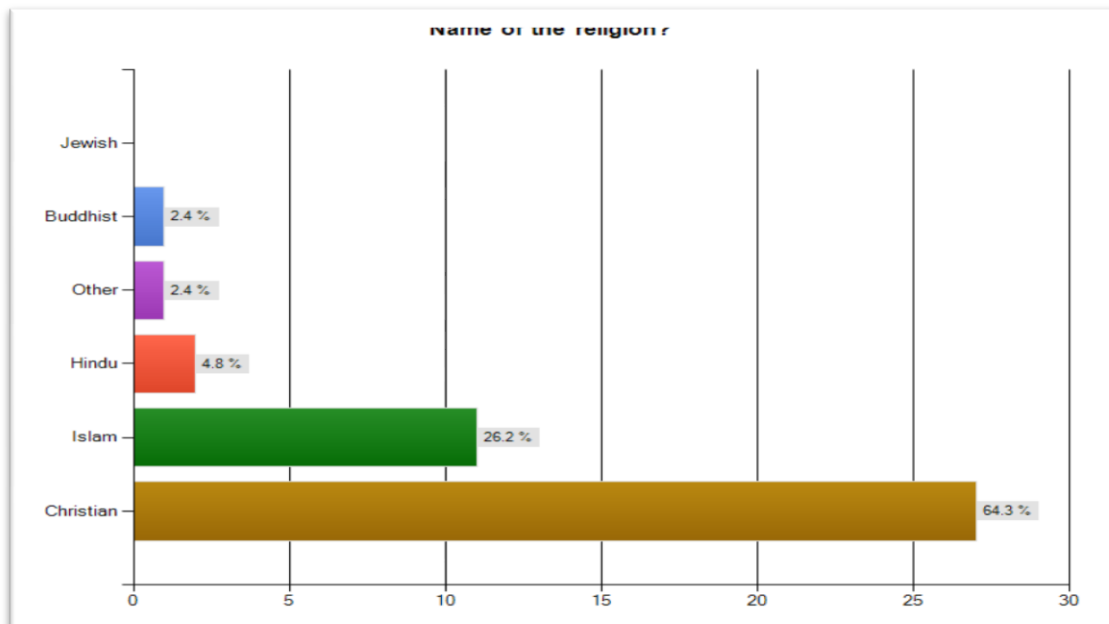
**Figure 4.8** Language (s) spoken at home**Figure 4.9** Languages spoken at work

As shown in Figures 4.8 and 4.9, most expatriates only speak English at home and at work. This is expected as they are Australian and English is the official language spoken in Australia. In the UAE, English is spoken widely. However, the literature review reveals that expatriates should make an effort and learn some Arabic, because it will help them build rapport faster with the locals. Speaking some Arabic, even only a few basic words would be very beneficial.

**Figure 4.10** How many countries has the expatriate lived in for longer the one year?

Most of the participants had lived overseas before their UAE assignment (see Figure 4.10). This is due to the fact that when employing new staff in expatriate roles, many companies prefer people who have worked and lived overseas before. In fact, 42.3% of the participants had lived in the Middle East before starting work in the UAE.

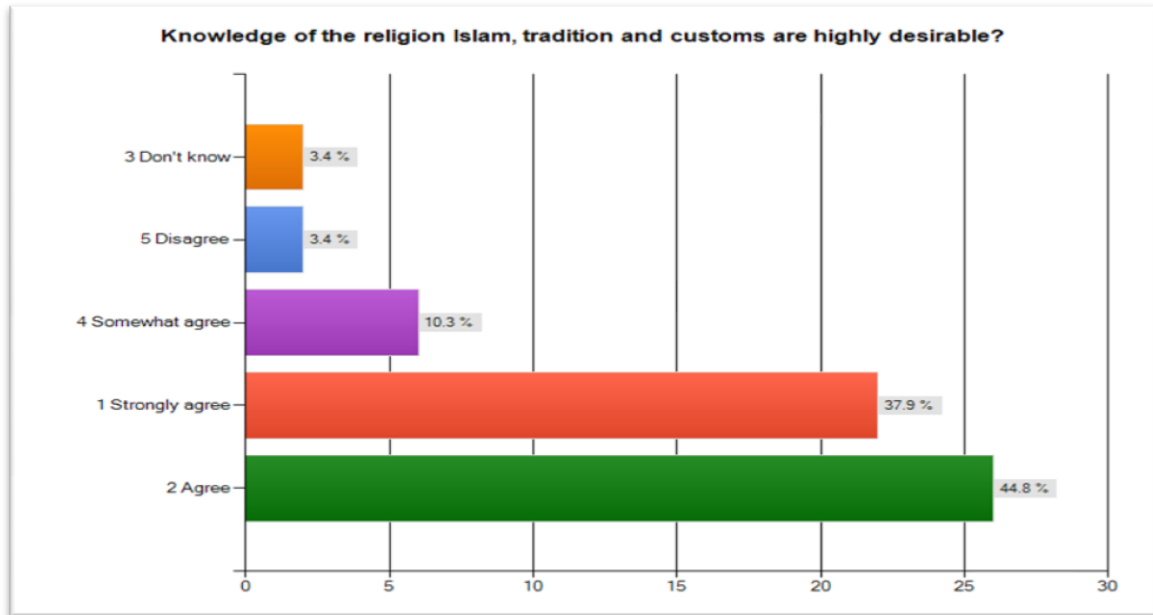
Knowing if the expatriates have lived in the Middle East before their current assignment can be useful, since that way the appropriate cross-cultural training can be offered to them. Additionally, if the expatriate lived overseas before, it can be a good indicator that they have a desire to learn about new cultures. As illustrated in the literature review, having a desire to learn is of high importance. Offering cross-cultural training to someone who is not willing to learn is useless and costly.

*Religion and Customs***Figure 4.11 Religious affiliation****Figure 4.12 Name of religion**

As indicated by Figure 4.12, 64.5% of expatriates have a religious affiliation. Furthermore, according to Figure 4.12, a total of 73.9% of expatriates who answered this question are non-Muslims. As indicated by the literature review, Islam is not only a religion; it is a way of life for Muslims. Hence, it is of high importance to learn about

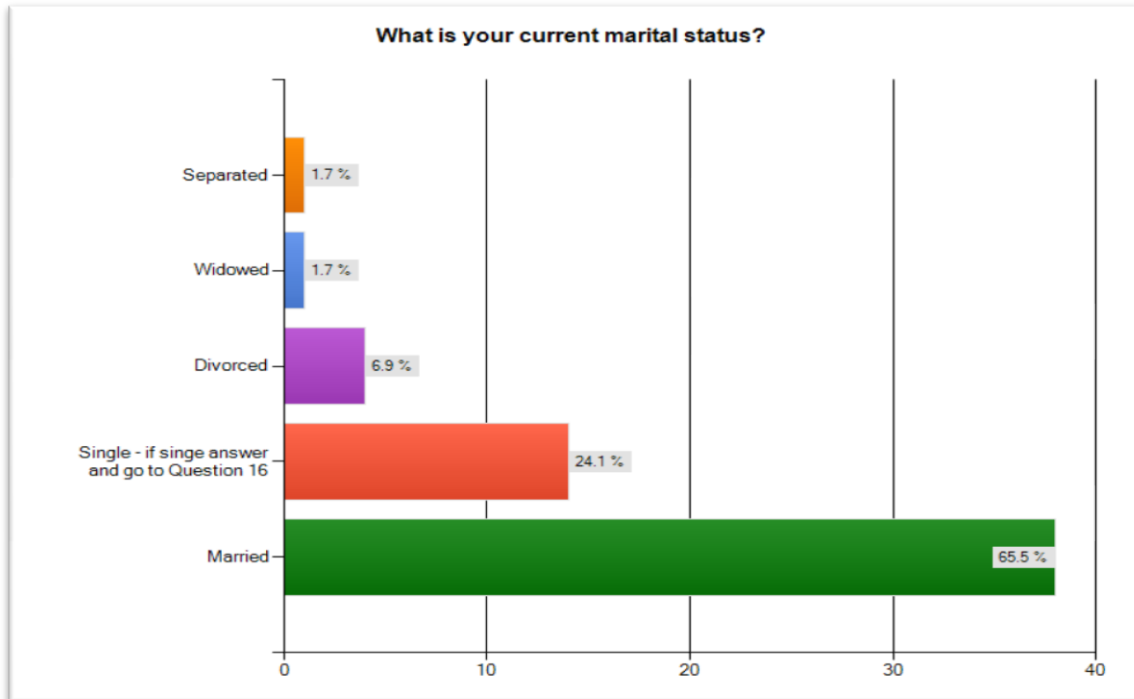
Islam when working in a Muslim country. Then, offending their Muslim managers and co-workers through ignorance can be avoided.

**Figure 4.13** Knowledge of Islam and Muslim traditions and customs is highly desirable



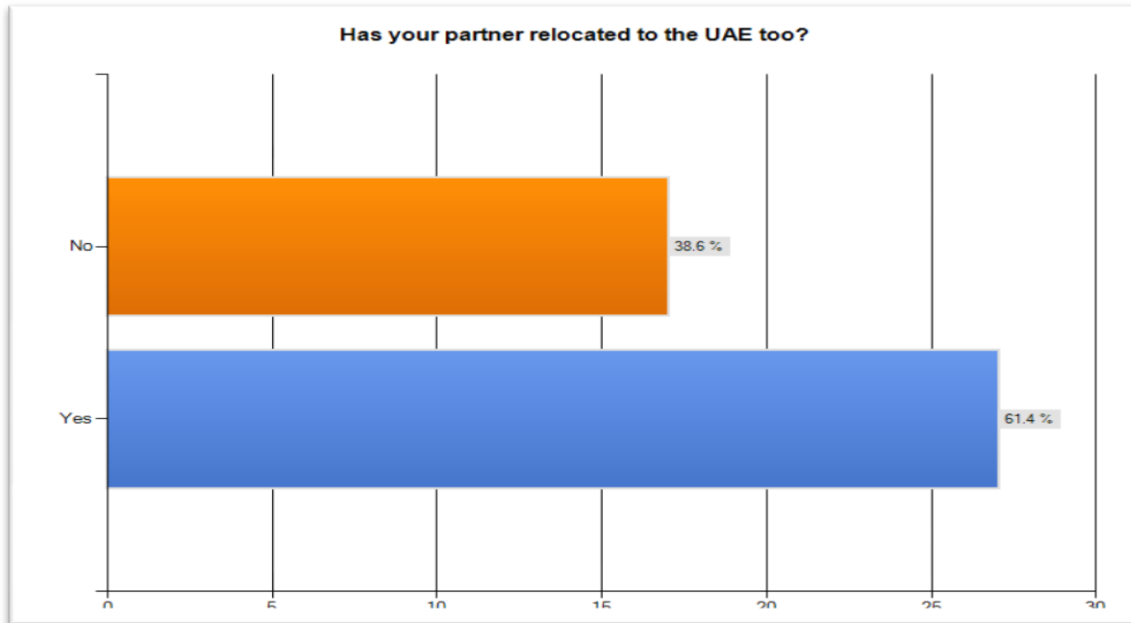
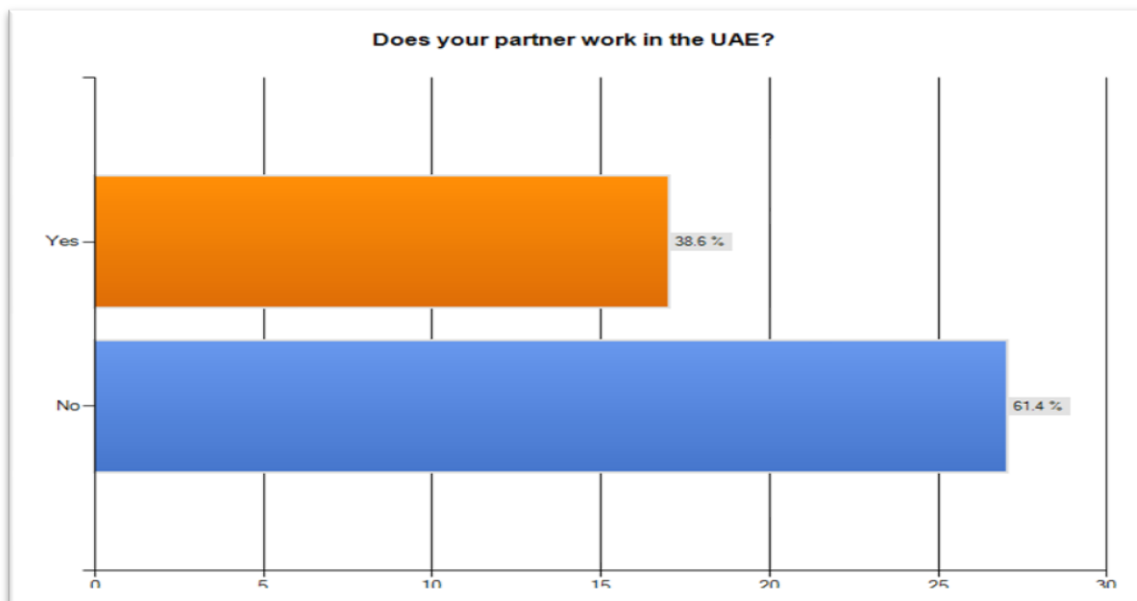
The above Figure 4.13 indicates that most of the respondents believe that knowledge of the religion Islam was highly desirable, with 93% of the expatriates agreeing with this question. Islam's values are implemented in everyday activities, socially and even in business. It guides Muslims by giving them a blueprint of what is socially acceptable, how to behave and how to live in harmony.



*Marital Status and Partner Location***Figure 4.14** Marital status

The marital status of the participants was mainly *married* (65.5%). This was followed by *single* with 24.1% (see Figure 4.14). This is due to the fact that most of the participants are in those age groups where they are now established as senior managers who moved to the UAE for a good opportunity. These results show that being married does not reduce the prospects of becoming an expatriate project manager. Younger people who have just graduated from University and decided to move to the UAE are usually single, as in the UAE an unmarried couple cannot live together.

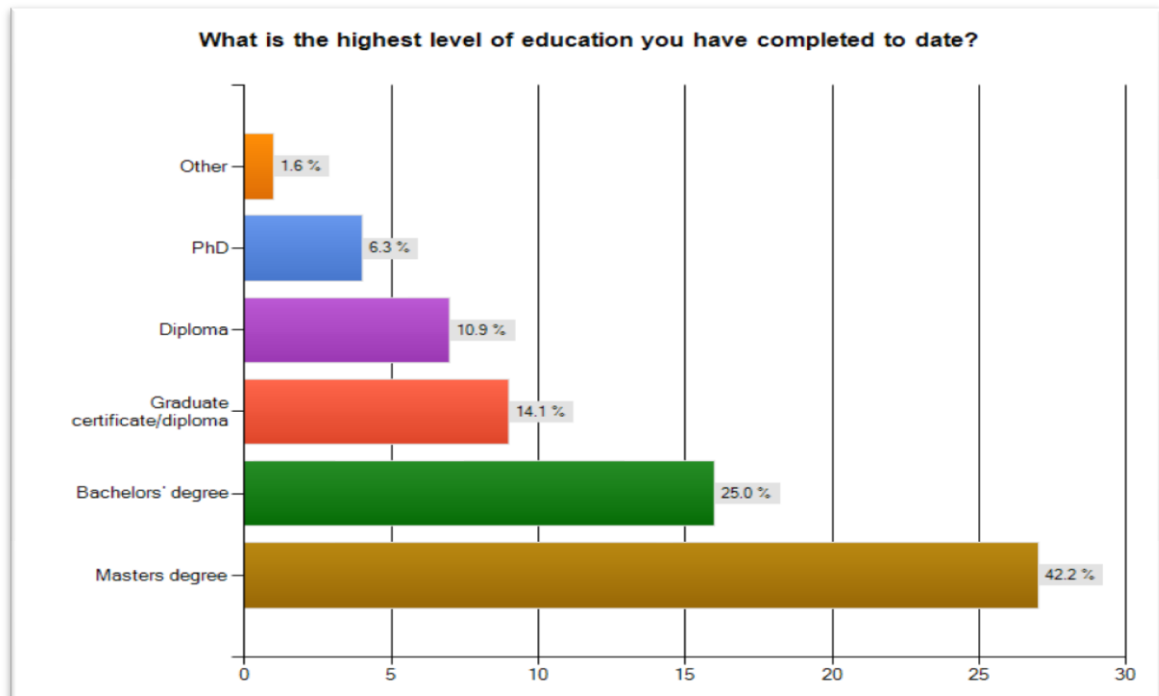
Having a support network such as a partner or a family can be invaluable to an expatriate, especially since the UAE is so different to Australia and culture shock can be hard to overcome without a support system. However, not all spouses and partners relocate to the UAE together (see Figure 4.15).

**Figure 4.15** Partner relocation to the UAE**Figure 4.16** Does the partner work in the UAE

Expatriates who are married usually relocate together to the UAE, which is indicated in Figure 4.15. In fact, 61.4% of respondents said that their partner relocated with them to the UAE to keep the family together. There are many reasons why families move together. For example, to keep the family together, for a better lifestyle or better job opportunities and in some cases the partner also received a good job offer or good schooling is available for their children.

However, of those partners who relocated only 38.6% work in the UAE too. Most of the open-ended questions in the survey indicated that this was due to the fact that the partner was the full-time care-giver for the children of the family. There are many reasons why someone's partner may not relocate to the UAE. These include education considerations, (children being in their final year of high school in Australia), and the partner having a great job back in Australia. Additionally, the high percentage (61.4%) of non-working spouses in the UAE suggests that it might be difficult for partners to find employment in the UAE. This could be a factor in deciding whether or not to move to the UAE (see Figure 4.16). Depending on the individual expatriate, some individuals need to have the partner with them in the UAE as a support system and some individuals prefer having their partner in the home country, so that they do not have to worry about the partner and family trying to adjust to a new country and culture. Those individuals are happy for their family to stay in Australia. This arrangement works well for the companies as well, as they do not need to provide cross-cultural training to the spouse and the expatriate children, if the family of the expatriate is not being relocated.

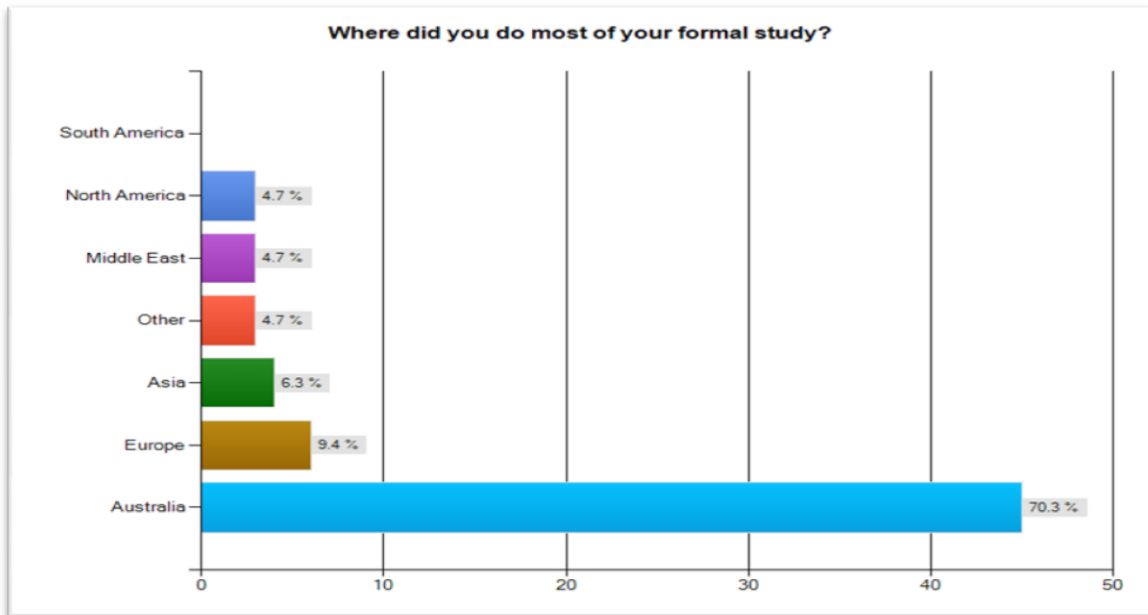
**Figure 4.17 Education level**



The most common highest level of education held by respondents was indicated a Masters degree (42.2 %, see Figure 4.17). There are a few reasons for this. Firstly, most people who completed this survey are in high-ranking positions and are clearly well-

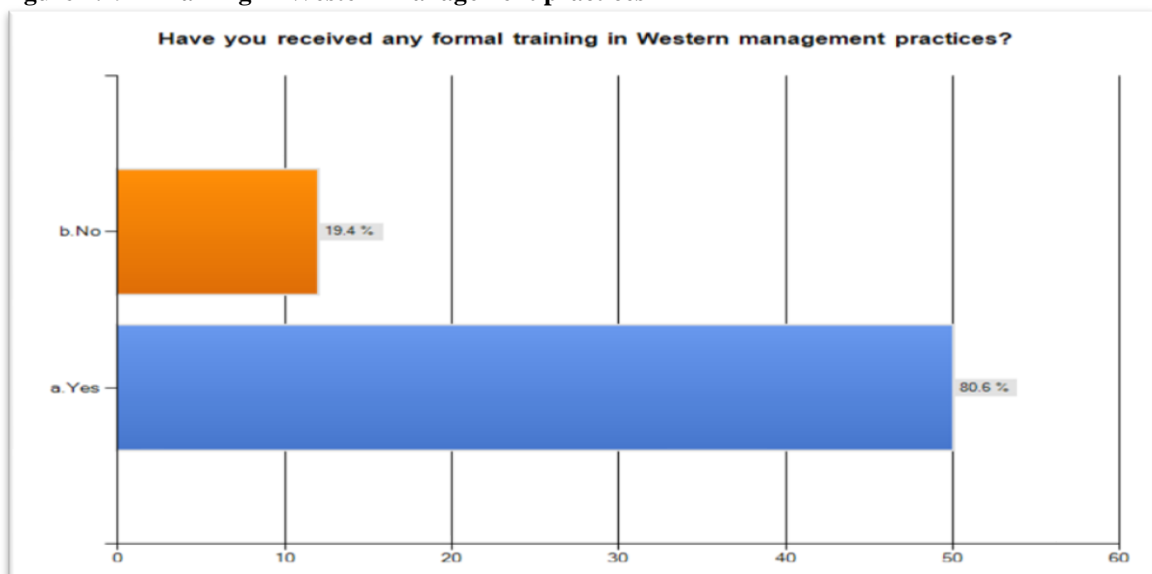
educated. Secondly, the UAE has a shortage of skilled labour; therefore Western expatriates who work there need to be well educated with proven qualifications rather than just experience. Additionally, for an Australian to get an UAE working visa he or she needs to have a University degree.

**Figure 4.18** Country in which most formal study was done



Most of the participants in this survey were born and raised in Australia, which explains why they did most of their formal studies in Australia. To be exact 70.3% said that they did most of their formal studies in Australia.

**Figure 4.19** Training in Western management practices

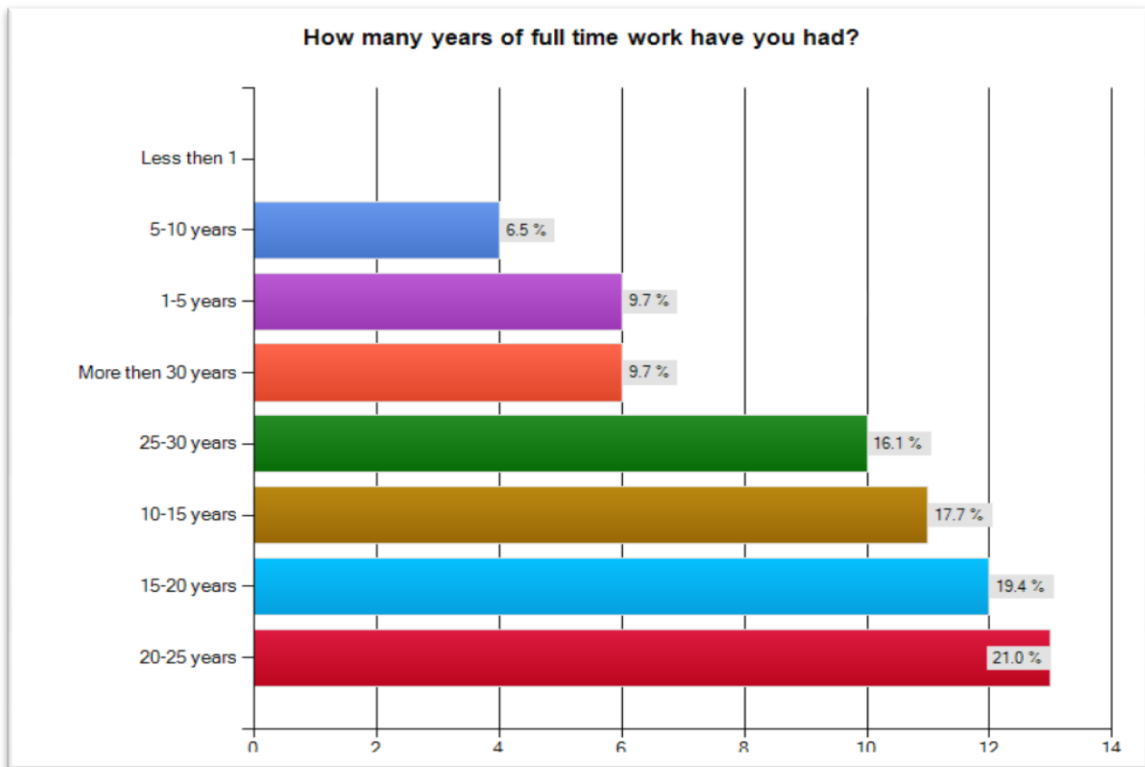


Additionally, 80.6% of the respondents said that they received formal training in

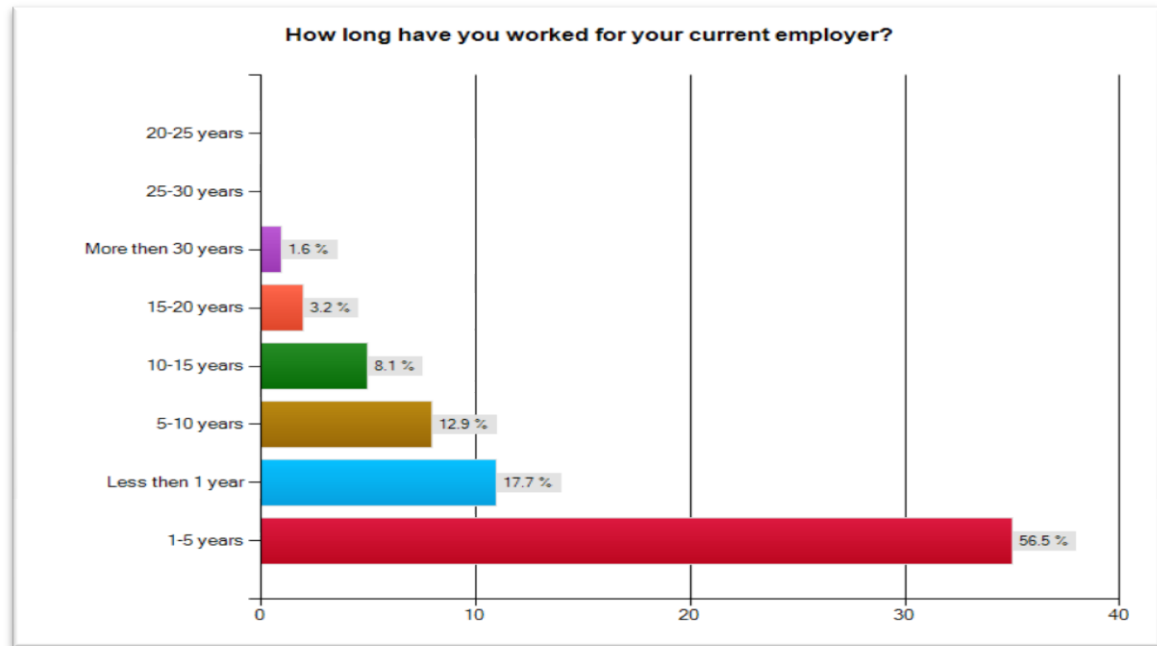
management; only 19.4% said that they did not (summarised in Figure 4.19). However, the ones who said that they did not receive formal training in Western practices were young and had not worked in a big organisation before moving to the UAE.

### *Experience and Seniority*

**Figure 4.20** Years of full-time work

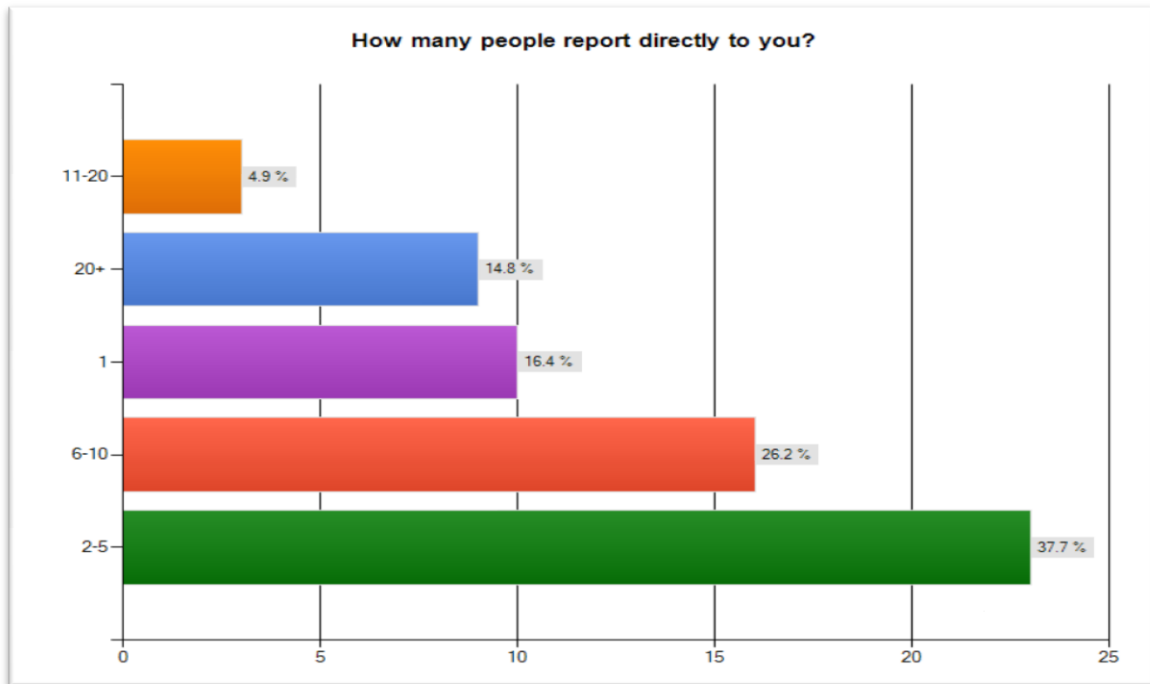


Since most of the participants in this research are senior managers, it is understandable that 83.9% of respondents have had anywhere between 10 to 30 years experience working full time. Only 16.2% of the total respondents had less than 10 years experience in full-time work (see Figure 4.20). As illustrated in the literature review, the UAE had commenced massive infrastructure projects in 2008 and they needed experienced project managers to manage and lead the employees working on those projects, so that the successful completion of those projects could be achieved.

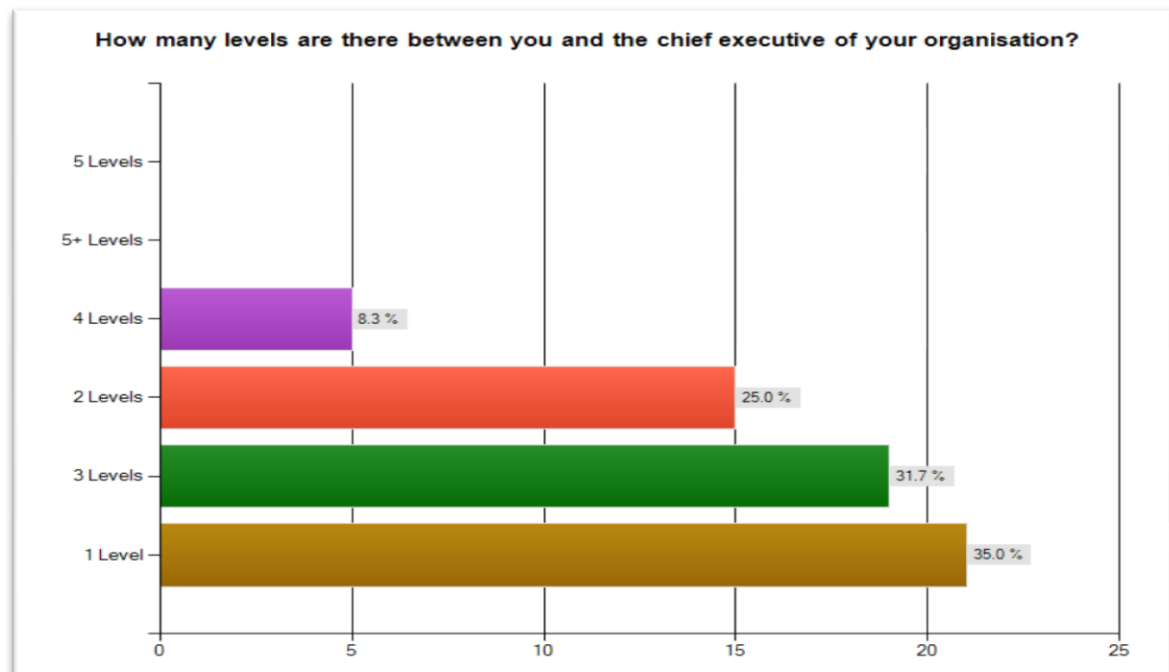
**Figure 4.21** Years working for the current employer

Most (56.5%) Western expatriates surveyed have been working only for one to five years for their current employer. The working profile is shown in Figure 4.21. The reasons for these results are numerous. As this survey is concerned with Western expatriates, it indicates a tendency to shorter-term employment. Some of this is due to their recent appointment to that company, or to their own youth or lack of long-term experience.

Having a shorter term of employment may also be due to the major differences between Arab and Australian culture. For example, the Arab culture is very much group-orientated and collective both in life and in business. The Australian culture, on the other hand, is an individualistic one. As illustrated in the literature review, to the Arabs saving face, honour, harmony, consensus, social solidarity, family, tribe and networking are of high importance. An example of this is that many projects in the UAE, especially the housing projects, continue to be developed on a tribal basis. Other evidence of this is at the tribal confederation where UAE's members of highest legislative council are appointed to represent all the key tribes. Hence, long-term commitment to an employer is a feature of Arab managers, but it is not as important in the individualist Australian workplace.

**Figure 4.22** How many people report directly to the individual

With a weighting towards senior management in the respondents, it is unsurprising that most have between 2 and 10 staff reporting to them (63.9%, see Figure 4.22).

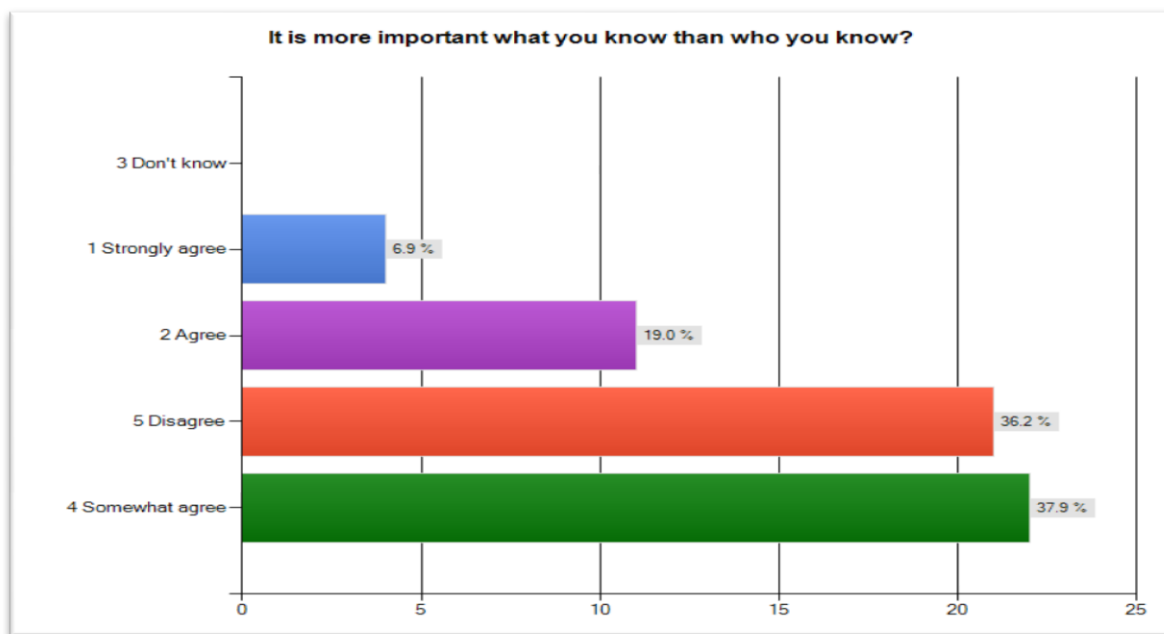
**Figure 4.23** Levels between the individual and the chief executive of the organisation

As indicated in Figure 4.23, in most cases there is only one level between the chief executive and the expatriates who completed this survey. Again, as senior managers most (35%) have only one level between them and the CEO of the organisation. A large

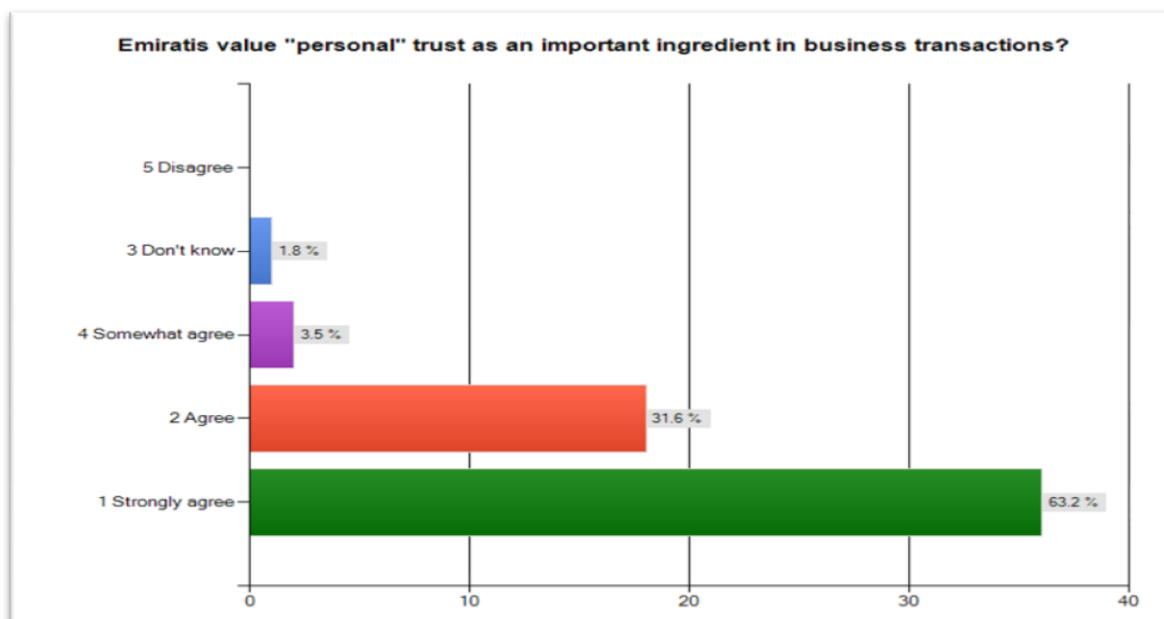
number (91.7%) are within three levels of the CEO. Cross-cultural training for those senior project managers is vital as they have to lead and motivate Arab employees as well as, often report to Arab CEOs. Hence, having those vital intercultural skills is of high importance.

### *Cultural Context*

**Figure 4.24**      **Contacts**



**Figure 4.25**      **Emphasis on personal trust**

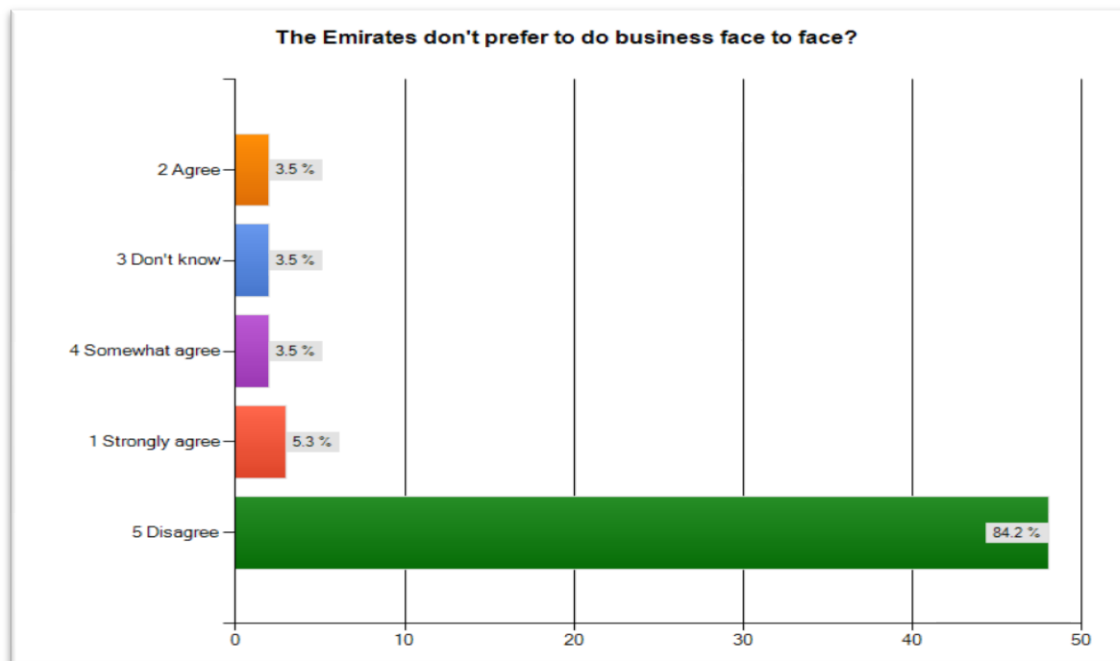


Figures 4.24 and 4.25 asked respondent to answer on an 'agree-disagree' scale.

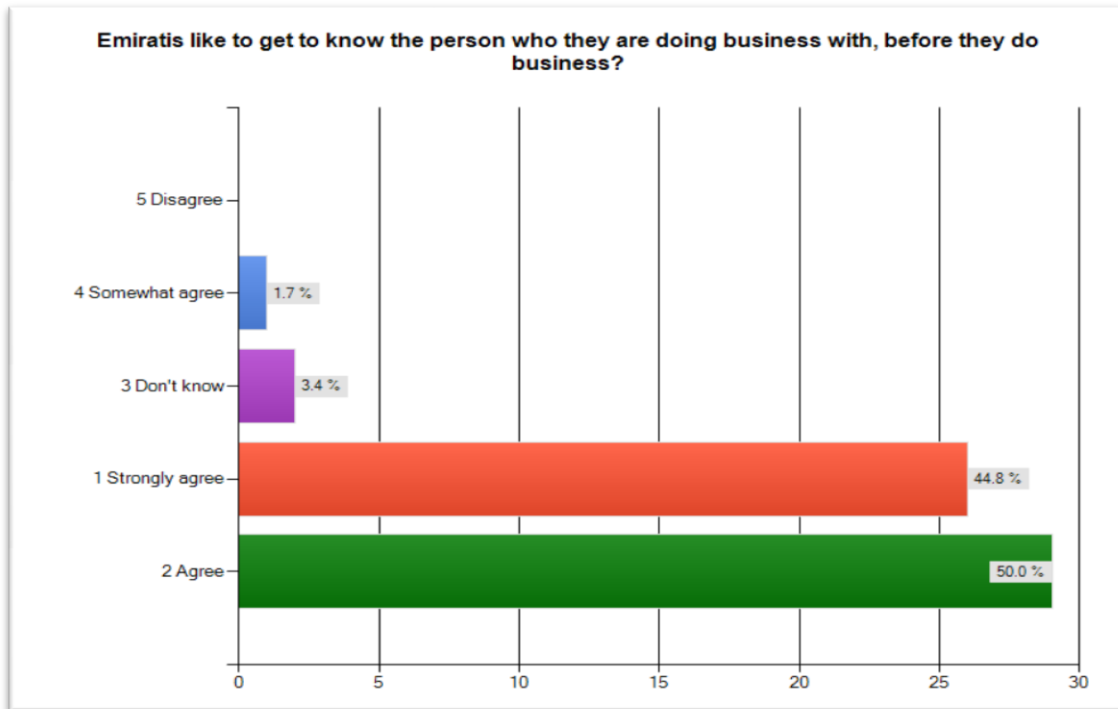


This provided the author with the opportunity to get a feel for whether participants agreed or disagreed with the statement, with more detailed questions to be asked in the case studies. For example, now the researcher can see that 36.2% of the expatriates questioned believed that it is more important who you know then what you know (see Figure 4.24). The researcher can ask how those individuals were recruited, what types of contacts are important, how to establish those contact, and so on. Figure 4.25 points out that there is a big emphasis (98.3%) on trust in the UAE; hence, in the case study interviews the researcher can ask questions about the best ways to establish trust. There is also evidence in the next question (Figure 4.26), that Arabs prefer doing business face-to-face as they like to build trust first with the person they are doing business with. Trust is the basis for business in the UAE and it can take considerable time to build trust. Once trust is established between the business associates, things such as overriding bureaucracies and procedures, which previously seemed difficult or impossible, suddenly become possible and new doors open.

**Figure 4.26** Face-to-face business



An overwhelming 84.2% disagree with the statement that Arabs do not prefer to do business face-to-face, as illustrated in Figure 4.26. This means that doing business face-to-face is the preferred method of doing business in the UAE.

**Figure 4.27 Bonding**

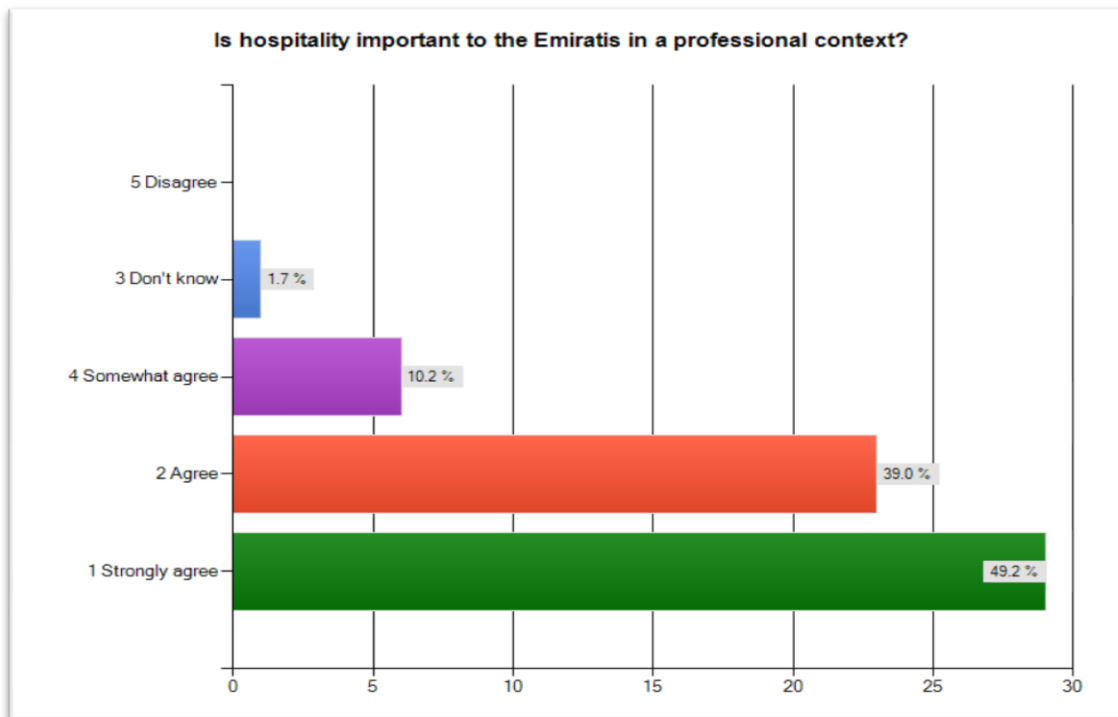
Similarly, 94.8% agree that Emiratis like to get to know the potential business partners (Figure 4.27). As Figures 4.26 and 4.27 indicate, Arabs like to get to know the person who they are going to do business with and this is often done by holding very lengthy meetings. Since relationships are so important in the UAE, considerable time and effort is placed on bonding in meetings. This bonding is critical in the Arab culture and it takes precedence over the task at hand. In the UAE, meetings usually start by talking about personal issues, interests, concerns and other matters that are not related to the work task itself. In fact, Arabs are known for holding long and deep conversations about many diverse subjects, ranging from politics to the arts and anything else that comes to mind. Holding those long discussions is like a national pastime. Arabs think that by talking about a subject or a problem for very long, and in depth, that talking alone is in itself 90% of the solution (Cerimagic and Smith 2011).

Those lengthy meetings with long conversations are a way for the Arabs to get to know the new potential business partners. They decide if they are going to do business with someone on the basis of whether they like that person. Additionally, most companies in the UAE are family owned and operated and family members will trust only those who are related to them. So, trust has to be established and that takes a long time and may involve many face-to-face meetings.

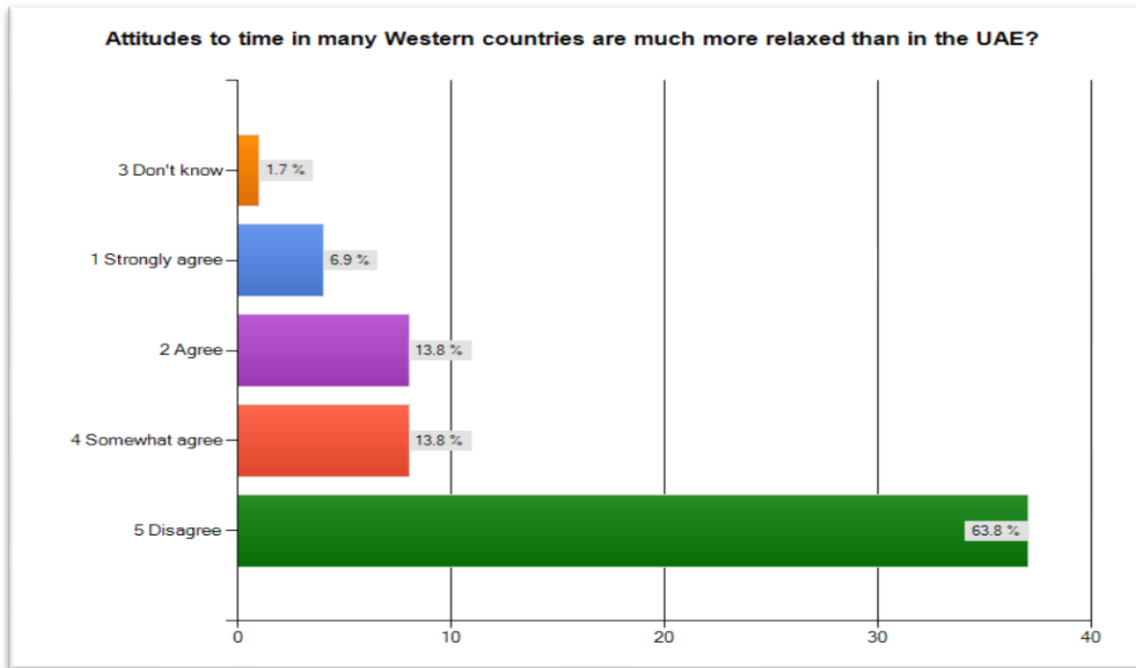
One should not forget that the Arabs have a high-context culture. So, long introductions are almost compulsory and are driven by the need to build context. In most Western cultures, straightforward answers are preferred and are seen as being honest. To the Arabs, this approach is considered insulting and therefore using Western strategies of directness are not encouraged.

Western expatriates have to learn to be flexible and patient and they have to understand that whatever they have planned to do will often take double the amount of time to do it than what has been originally planned. Cross-cultural training assists expatriates by teaching them about these cultural differences and how to best cope with them.

**Figure 4.28**      **Hospitality**

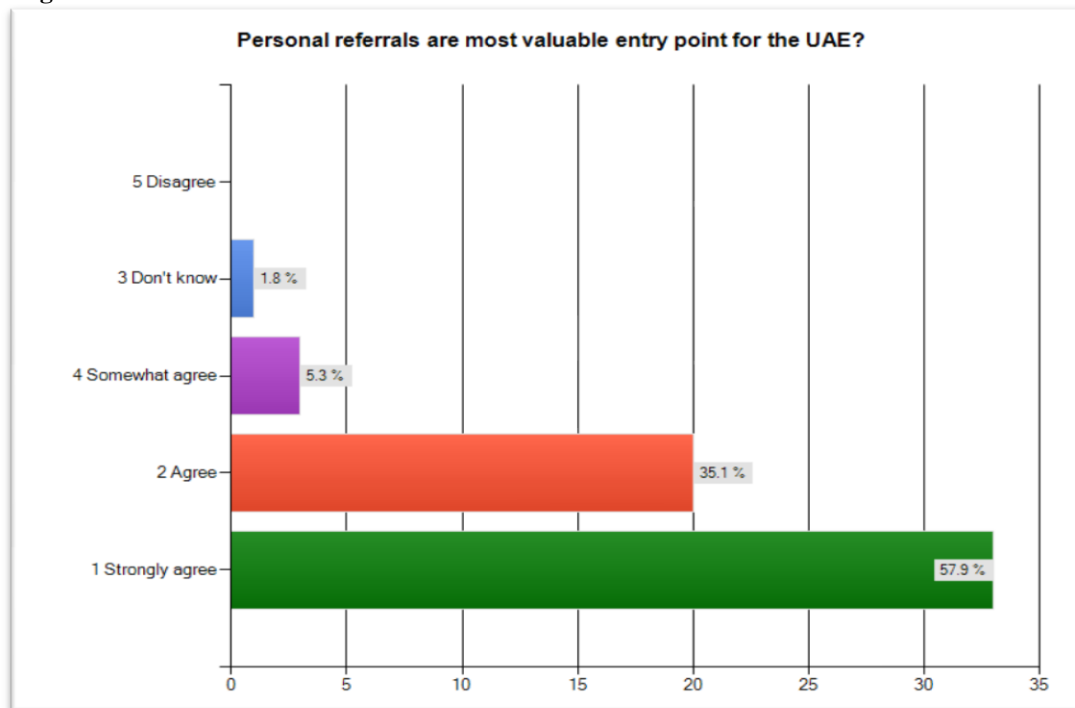


Not one respondent disagreed that business hospitality is important to Emiratis. In fact, 98.4% agree that hospitality is important (see Figure 4.28).

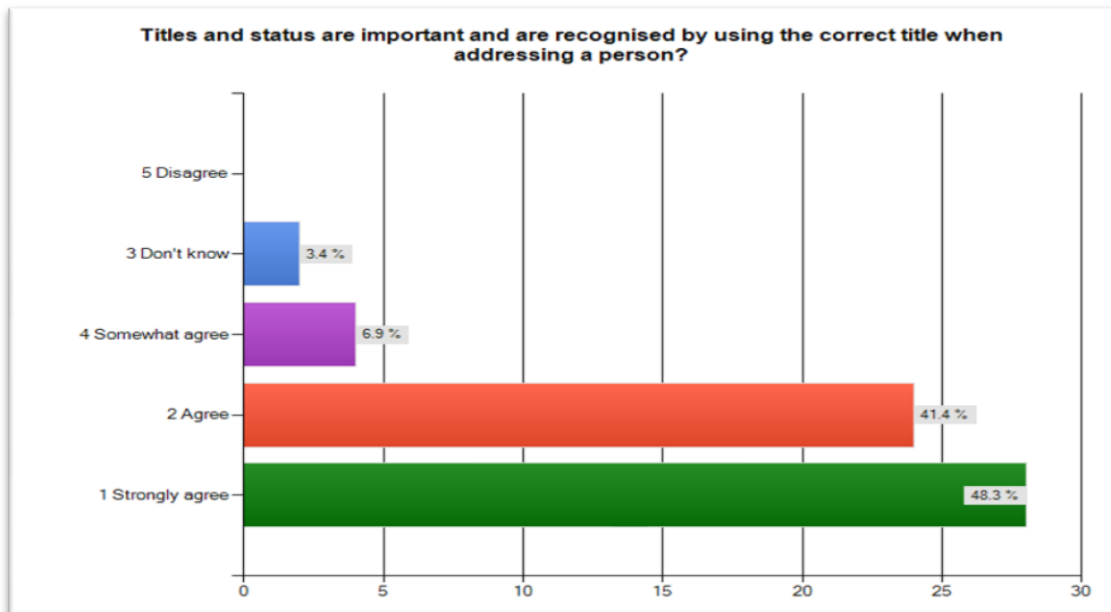
**Figure 4.29** Attitude to time

Australian (Western) project managers need to take their time and bond with their Arab colleagues before they rush into business-related matters. If one rushes into business without taking time to socialise and get to know the Arab associates with whom they will be working, it may cause offence. Hospitality is very important to Arabs. If the Arab is the host, he/she will be very welcoming and the Arab host will honour their guests. In Arab culture, business dealings will not go ahead until those rituals of hospitality have been performed. As the two graphs (Figures 4.28 and 4.29) above illustrate, hospitality in the Arab culture is paramount as it is a matter of honour and those traditional practices are important, but it can take a long time and can sometimes be frustrating for workers used to Western-style business practices. This is why, unlike Westerners, who believe that *time is money*; Arabs have a very relaxed attitude to time as indicated in the graph above. In the Arab world, it is all about the process of *timing* rather than *time*.

This is something project managers need to be aware of when conducting business and meetings in the UAE. As indicated by the literature review, the Arab culture is context-high and they like to take their time to get to know their potential business partners. To establish trust takes a long time and this is where having personal referees is useful, as indicated by Figure 4.30.

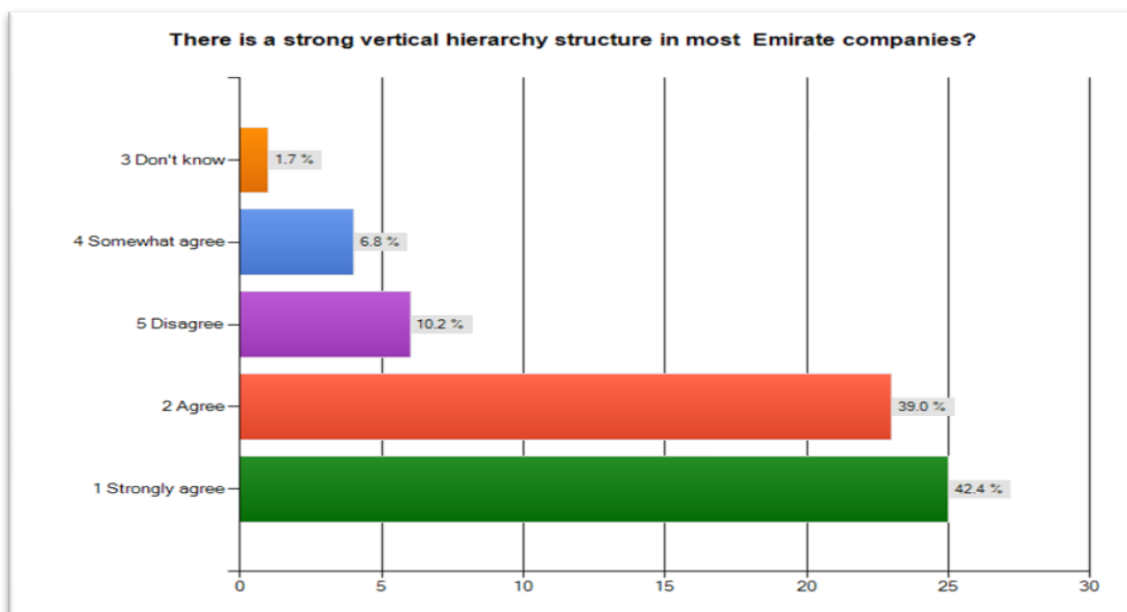
**Figure 4.30 Personal referrals**

The UAE Arabs have a tribal background, so tribe, family and the community are their most important priority (see Figure 4.30). Those ties are cherished and placed above material interests. Reputation and honour is also valued in the UAE. This is why personal referrals are most valuable. The person who is the referee needs to be someone who is experienced, respected, trustworthy and successful in the UAE.

*Culture and Business***Figure 4.31** Use of titles

Most (96.6 %), of the respondents agree that titles and status are important.

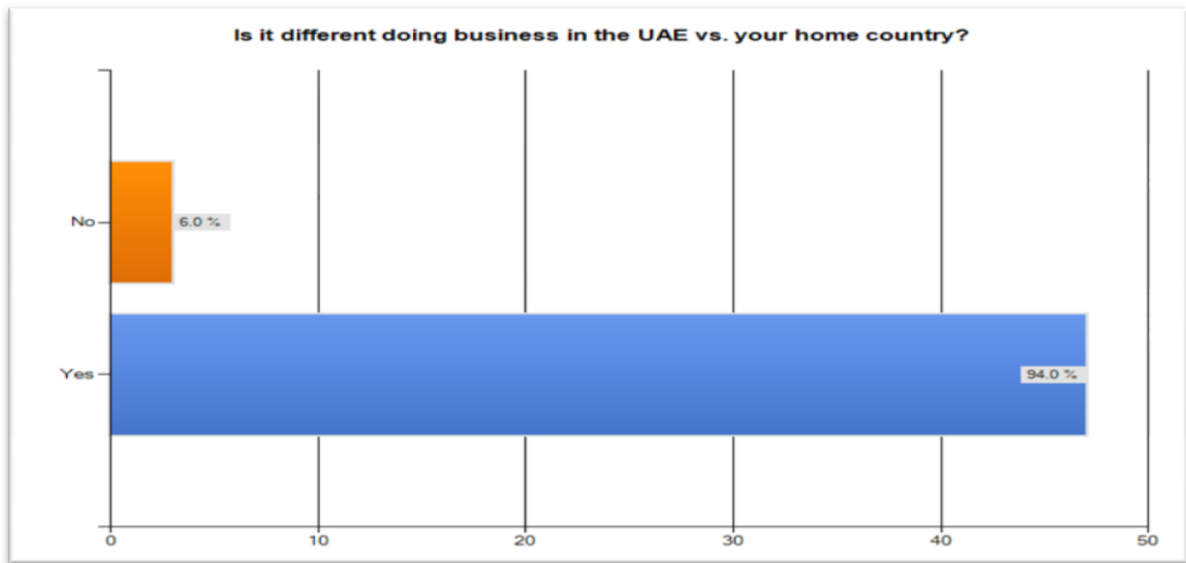
As indicated in Figure 4.31, titles are very important in the UAE, and they can be very elaborate. Titles such as ‘Sheikh’, ‘Doctor’, ‘Professor’ and so on, are used both in a literal and honorific sense. Titles to the Arabs indicate the individual’s status in society and also their achievements. Expatriates need to be aware of this rule and follow it, in order to avoid causing offence.

**Figure 4.32** Vertical hierarchy

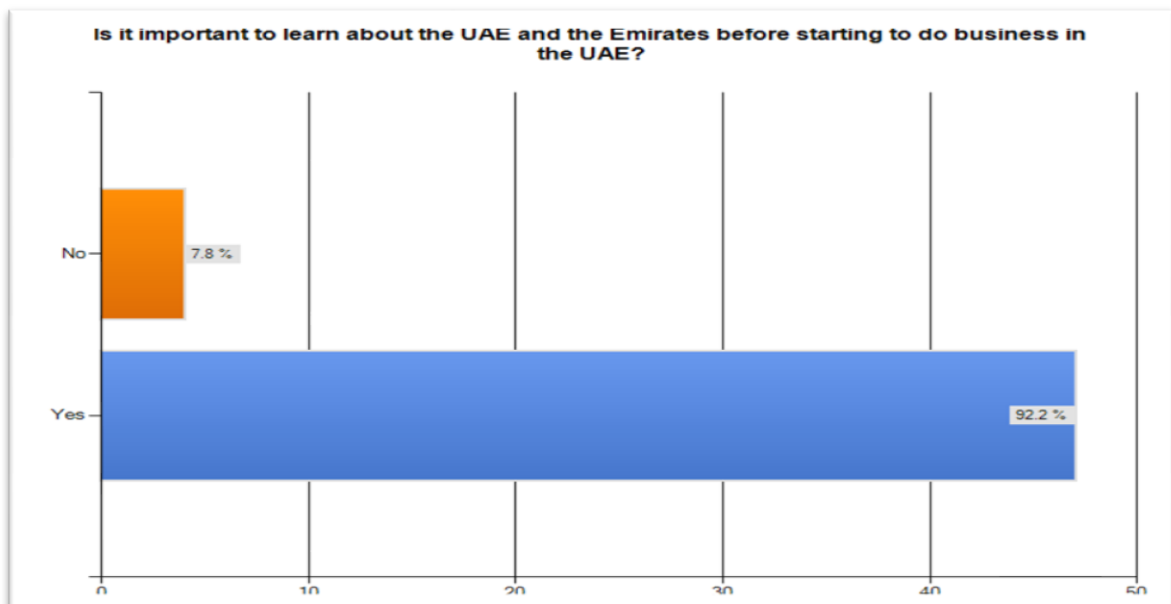
Arabs are a tribal culture and the head of the tribe is the Sheikh, who has absolute power. The respondents agree (88.2%) that Arabs are a hierarchical society, which carries over into the company environment (see Figure 4.32).

#### *Timing and Preparation*

**Figure 4.33** Difference in doing business in the UAE vs. the individual's home country



**Figure 4.34** Importance of being appropriately prepared



Islam plays a very pervasive and influential role in Arab culture and Arabs live in compliance to its standards and teachings. All Islamic legislation is based on laws derived either from the Qur'an or from the deeds and sayings of their prophet,

Muhammad a.s. This is called *Shari'a* law (Tibi, 2001). From the beginning, Islam has been a political as well as a religious community (Appleby, Scott, and Sivan, 2003; Vasillopoulos, 2003).

Apostolov (2004) and Esposito (1992), acknowledge the most critical question for Muslims in many countries is how to categorise the life of a particular community that is part of a general society and not governed according to Muslim law. Generally, Muslims must conceive of their religion, at least in part, as equivalent to a voluntary association (Apostolov, 2004; Esposito, 1992).

There is a lot that is important to learn and know about the UAE, since doing business in the UAE is vastly different from doing business in Australia. This is reflected in both the Figures 4.33 and 4.34, where those questions were answered by enabling the respondent to provide a brief written response.

The brief answers revealed that Australians can at times find the Arabs frustrating, with Westerners finding Arabs to be indirect, evasive, vague and preferring not to deal with problems and/or risks which the Arabs tended to ignore. However, on the other hand Arabs are quiet often irritated by Westerners who they consider frank and too direct, behaviour which can be interpreted by an Arabs as being insensitive or rude.

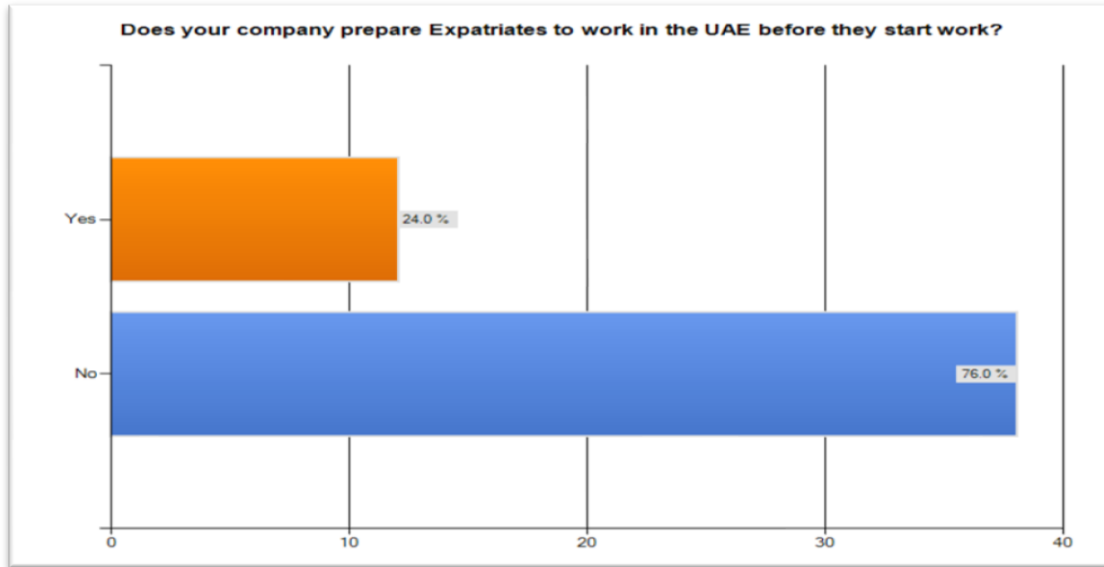
The Arabs place a lot of emphasis on relationships, and relationship-building takes precedence over the task at hand, to the point where maintaining harmony at work will take priority over the task or the truth. This is apparent in the way Arabs communicate with each other and with Westerners. Instead of directness, when responding to questions or situations, Arabs often use hints, idioms and proverbs such as "*Inshallah*" (which means God willing). However, when an Arab answers a query with "*Inshallah*" it can mean anything from "*Yes, Maybe, No, Leave it with me*", et cetera. This means that Australians and other Westerners need to learn about body language and psychology and be able to read non-verbal signals such as eye contact, posture and intonations. Those skills will allow them to interpret responses such as "*Inshallah*".

As indicated in the literature review, a communication gap can be very frustrating to Westerners. Cross-cultural training will help them to become more sensitive and learn



more about the Arab culture, thus knowing how to manage situations like those described above.

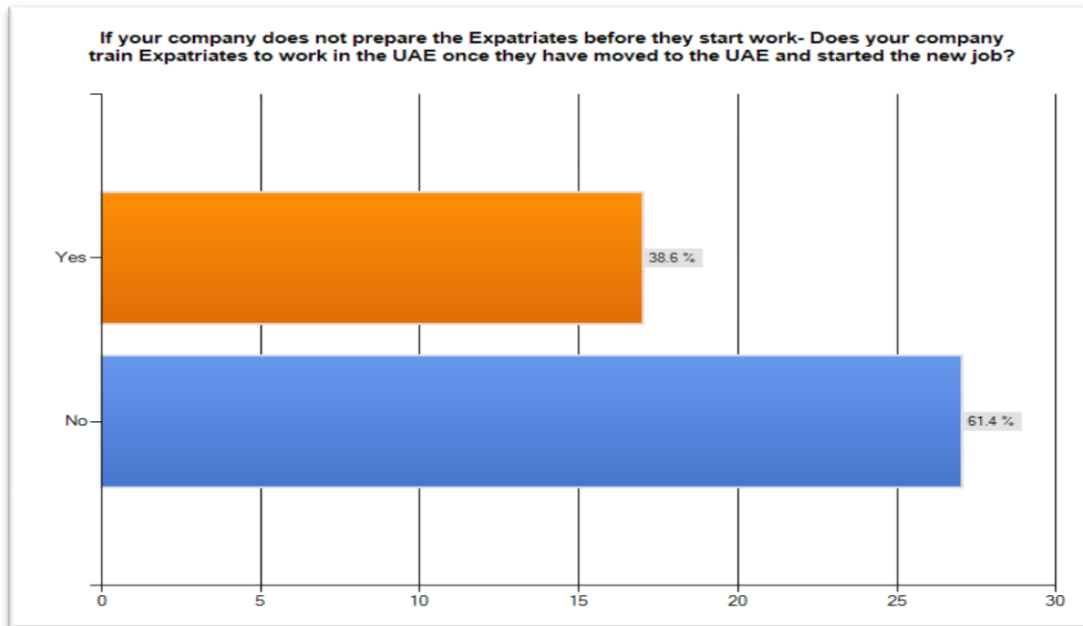
**Figure 4.35** Does the company prepare expatriates to work in the UAE before they start work?



Preparation of expatriates for the UAE climate was considered absolutely vital by both the expatriates and the researchers, yet as Figure 4.35, indicates most expatriates do not receive any preparation for what lies ahead, before they start work in the UAE. Companies appear to have a *sink or swim* attitude when it comes to expatriate preparation, with 76% of participants reporting that they did not receive any training at all. Another advantage to this preparation is that expatriates report that proper and adequate preparation helps them quickly feel part of the community.

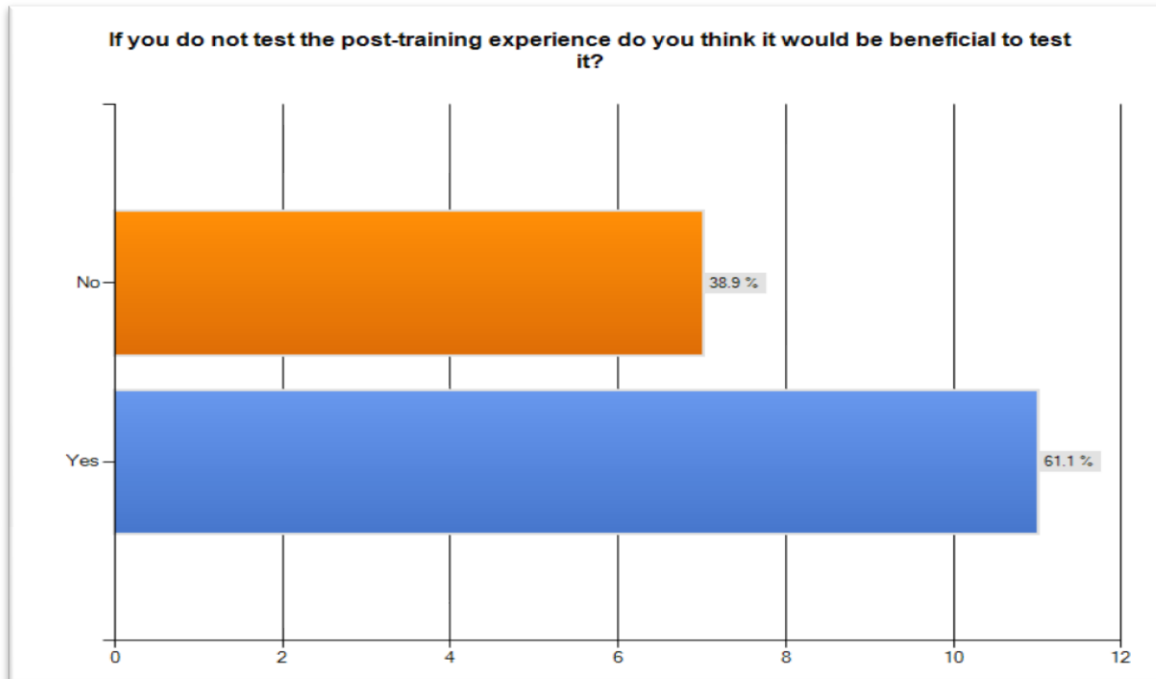
There is a pattern in this data which suggests that most companies that offer cross-cultural training mainly offer intense inductions. The 24% of expatriates who reported that they were prepared by their company typically undertook an induction process. However, it was reported that the inductions were quite vague and not particularly useful in preparing them for what really occurs. This means that the preparation that is provided to some expatriates is inadequate or insufficient. Preparation such as induction programs should be up-to-date and relevant.

Since very often no form of cross-cultural training is offered, some companies employ workers who they consider to be the best people in their teams and expect them to perform and work well in the new and unfamiliar environment.

**Figure 4.36** Does the company provide on-site training for the expatriates?

Most companies do not provide on-site training either. Figure 4.36 indicates that 61.4% of expatriates reported that they did not receive any training after they arrived in the UAE. By not offering adequate preparation to expatriates, the companies are not helping the expatriates to be good, effective and committed employees. If an expatriate is not able to work to his/her potential because the correct tools in the form of cross-cultural training and preparation have not been provided, that expatriate is not going to be able to make the profit or deals required, conduct the necessary networking and so on, that they would otherwise have been able to achieve.

Some companies hire external human resources (HR) companies, which offer in-house training sessions, on cultural understanding and work ethics. However, according to the survey results companies do not encourage their staff to go to these sessions. In addition to this, the survey also uncovered a need for professional development training, but again, typically most companies do not provide this training.

**Figure 4.37** Testing the Post-training experience

Opinions on testing post-training experience are indicated by Figure 4.37. Post-training experience is considered important and companies should invest by assessing the post-training experience. Most (61.1%), participants agree that testing for post-training experience would be beneficial.

The testing of the post-training experience can indicate if the training is working. If tests show that training is not achieving its intended goals, then the training can be modified. Additionally, questioning post-training experience can provide feedback for suggested improvements and therefore the training can be revised on a regular basis. In return, this helps the company save money by having well-trained workers who are able to deliver successful projects.

#### **4.4 Qualitative Survey Results**

The quantitative survey results indicate that cross-cultural training is necessary if the expatriates are to live and work in the UAE. The next step was to analyse the qualitative survey data. The qualitative section of the online survey consists of 19 questions.

Those questions were designed to find out if and how the expatriates are prepared and trained for their overseas assignments. However, these questions do not only focus on

training, they also aim to get a better picture of the expatriate and more insight into the expatriate's opinions and feedback.

Table 4.1 deals with the analysis of the qualitative survey data which was collected from the online survey.

Table 4.1 consists of two columns, for each of the questions. The first column is for the Question number and the comments; the second column is for the topic/question.

Please see Appendix D for the raw survey data.

# CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

**Table 4.1**      **Analysis of Qualitative Survey Data**

<b>Question 1</b>	<p><b>Has your partner relocated to the UAE too?</b></p> <p><i>Yes - with brief reasons</i></p>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>The survey revealed that most participants who completed it were married (66.7%) and are male (73.5%).</p> <p>So when asked if their partner relocated to the UAE 62.8% of Australians who completed the online survey said that their partner relocated with them to the UAE to keep the family together.</p> <p>However, of those partners who relocated only 38.6% work in the UAE too.</p> <p>This might be due to the fact that the partner full-time care-giver for the children. Most of the answers indicated that the partner isn't working because they are taking care of the kids'. Therefore only 6.9% of the partners stayed in Australia and did not relocate.</p>
<b>Question 2</b>	<p><b>Has your partner relocated to the UAE too?</b></p> <p><i>No - with brief reasons</i></p>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>The survey revealed that 22.8% of participants who completed the survey were single. It also revealed that 7% were divorced, 1% separated and 1.8% widowed.</p> <p>In total, 32.6% of the participants did not have a partner. This indicates that of the 39.5% who said their partner did not relocate to the UAE, for 32.6% it was because they have no partner. Therefore only 6.9% of the partners stayed in Australia and did not relocate. This is perhaps due to the fact that the partner has a good job in Australia or kids, which was indicated by the survey results.</p>
<b>Question 3</b>	<p><b>What is your official work title? (for example, project manager)</b></p>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>Most (78%) of the survey participants were project managers. This research was focusing on project managers, however, some of the survey participants were from different areas. This indicates, that the research data is versatile and its findings can be applied to different disciplines, not only project management.</p>

# CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

<b>Question 4</b>	<b>What are the five most important things Expatriates need to know before starting to do business in the UAE?</b>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>It is very clear from the answers that learning about the Arab culture is one of the most important skills for expatriates to have.</p> <p>Understanding the business climate and learning about the laws and rules of the country is very important in order to be successful and do business in the UAE.</p> <p>Knowledge of business ethics, religion, geography of the country and language skills helps with performance. Knowing how to speak some Arabic can be a real advantage, as it shows respect.</p> <p>It also very important to understand the local customs and respect them, not just for business but also for everyday living.</p>
<b>Question 5</b>	<b>Is it different doing business in the UAE vs. your home country?</b> <i>Yes – with brief answer</i>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>Doing business in the UAE is considered much more personal than doing business in Australia.</p> <p>The UAE is a developing country so technical, social, legal and financial systems are not mature.</p> <p>Patience is required. The UAE is not a free-market economy and generally a local company or free zone authority sponsorship is required to do business. This must be taken into account when considering time and cost implications.</p> <p>Dealing with lots of different nationalities where English is not the first language.</p> <p>Legal contracts are not as important as in Australia. This is because personal honour and trust are more important than legal contracts.</p>
<b>Question 6</b>	<b>Is it different doing business in the UAE vs. your home country?</b> <i>No - with brief answer</i>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>The technical side of project management is basically the same in both countries.</p>
<b>Question 7</b>	<b>What do you think is important to learn about the UAE and the Emiratis before starting to do business in the UAE?</b>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>Cultural awareness is the number one skill that is necessary in this environment and respecting the culture goes hand in hand with it.</p> <p>The other important thing that was found throughout this research was that personal relationships and trust are important.</p> <p>The other advice that was given was to prepare learn as much as is possible. Learning everything about the country, its people, religion, customs, rules and regulations is very important.</p> <p>Keeping updated with the rules and regulations is very important as rules and regulations are changed very quickly and frequently.</p>

**CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

<b>Question 8</b>	<b>In your opinion what are the five most critical factors for being successful in business in the UAE?</b>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>Expatriates must network and maintain integrity and reputation.</p> <p>A bad reputation will result in reduced work or no work at all.</p> <p>Finding a sponsor with good connections for the field the expatriate is in; understanding the nature of Arab negotiation; being aware of the informal relationships that exist; being careful who you upset; understanding what can and what cannot be achieved.</p> <p>If an expatriate notices that he/she cannot cope with the culture, that individual should leave the UAE.</p> <p>Proactive Emirati sponsor or the right name from the Royal list; having a good team with the right capability; local knowledge and team members that have Arabic background/nationality to support Australians; niche market; support of international team when payments are late and locals squeeze price due to economic global crisis (EGC).</p> <p>Understand the Arab culture/values. Strong people skills are essential. Need influential local contacts to be successful in business.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A good local partner who can get things done</li> <li>2. A partner that has money and will spend it, who is in it for the long term</li> <li>3. One needs an idea that will work and is wanted in the UAE (i.e. don't try and sell ice to Eskimos)</li> <li>4. Respect for the UAE</li> <li>5. Respect for Emiratis and other nationalities</li> </ol>
<b>Question 9</b>	<b>Do you think it would be beneficial to prepare Expatriates for the UAE business climate?</b>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>Preparation of expatriates for the UAE climate was considered absolutely vital.</p> <p>However, preparation such as induction programs should be up to date and relevant.</p> <p>Proper and adequate preparation helps expatriates quickly feel part of the community.</p>
<b>Question 10</b>	<b>If your company does not prepare the Expatriates before they start work, does your company train Expatriates to work in the UAE once they have moved to the UAE and started the new job?</b>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>There is an induction process which four out of six of the cases studies offered to the expatriates, but it is quite vague and does not provide accurate preparation for the reality of life in the UAE.</p> <p>There seems to be a 'sink or swim' attitude when it comes to expatriate preparation.</p> <p>The preparation which is provided to some expatriates is inadequate or insufficient.</p> <p>Only two case studies advised that they had adequate and appropriate training.</p>

# CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

<b>Question 11</b>	<b>How are they trained?</b>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>A pattern emerged from this data that suggested that most companies that offer training mainly offer intense inductions. It is very rare but there was one company that completed this survey that seems to be doing a bit more than the rest by providing their staff with intense inductions followed by cultural training which is then followed up every 10 weeks with more cultural training. This company also provides their staff with a list of books they are required to read. Additionally, they observe expatriates in the workplace and provide feedback. They have a buddy (if possible the buddy should be an expatriate).</p> <p>The question is how many people have the time to read books if they are busy with moving countries and trying to adjust to a new job.</p> <p>There are HR companies that offer in-house training sessions on cultural understanding and work ethics. However, according to the survey results, they are not of much benefit to professional staff as the cross-cultural training that is provided is usually superficial, out of date, not specific enough and the course/workshops are too short to learn all that is important.</p> <p>Additionally, the survey also uncovered that if training is needed other than professional development, typically the companies have no time for it. This is very much dictated by the fast-tracked nature of the projects and their scale.</p>
<b>Question 12</b>	<b>What methods are used to train the Expatriates?</b>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>Since there is no time for training, companies, employ the best possible employees to add to teams and to develop along the way with their team and peers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In the induction, the participants are typically provided with hard copy documents and online in-house training.</li> <li>▪ Booklets and discussions and mentor to answer and assist with their queries.</li> <li>▪ Lecture-type lectures and seminars videos, white papers, reports.</li> <li>▪ Classroom environment with detailed slides and presentations.</li> </ul>
<b>Question 13</b>	<b>How many hours are they trained for?</b>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	On average, eight hours of training were provided. However, some companies provide more, some less.
<b>Question 14</b>	<b>How do you test if the expatriate has been sufficiently trained?</b>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	It can be difficult to test if the expatriate has been sufficiently trained. Most had not been tested to see if they have been sufficiently trained and the rest were evaluated by being observed on the job.



# CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

<b>Question 15</b>	<b>If you do not test the post-training experience, do you think it would be beneficial to test it?</b> <i>Yes – with briefly explain</i>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	Most participants agree that testing post-training experience would be beneficial.
<b>Question 16</b>	<b>If you do not test the post-training experience, do you think it would be beneficial to test it?</b> <i>No – with briefly explain</i>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	The expatriates who said that there is no need to test for it said so because they believe it would be difficult and very costly to test. Some believe it's not necessary to test the post-training experience as it is a practical application.
<b>Question 17</b>	<b>In your opinion what do you think can be done to help Expatriates be prepared for work in the UAE?</b>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>A mentor/local friend/colleague would be of great help to an expatriate.</p> <p>It is very apparent that expatriates need to know what they are getting themselves into. It's recommended that if possible, expatriates should visit the UAE before they move over there.</p> <p>An orientation session is recommended, the orientation session should be delivered by someone who has worked and lived in the UAE. Preferably the session should be delivered by an expatriate who has worked and lived in the UAE, who knows what the new expatriates are going through.</p> <p>Sessions on culture and Business practices are important when working in the UAE.</p> <p>Better pre-information re: contract; labour laws - summary; Do's and Don'ts re dress, alcohol, drugs, hand gestures, etc; living conditions; inflation; finding accommodation; buying a car; finding parking; opening bank accounts and credit cards and dealing</p> <p>With different financial practices;</p> <p>How to cope when everything does not work or breakdown; how to cope with constant red tape.</p> <p>Cultural sessions, language study, a preliminary visit, discussions with local managers and the team they are going to work with, meeting with anyone who has returned from the same posting, but more importantly, making sure the expatriate is the right person for the position first. This can be all provided by the companies to help expatriates adjust and come with the new environment and the challenges which come with it.</p> <p>The new expatriates can help themselves by talking to other expats currently living and working in the country would help manage expectations.</p>
<b>Question 18</b>	<b>How does the Arab culture influence the practices that Australian project managers adopted when working in the UAE?</b>
<b>Summary and Commentary</b>	<p>The answers showed that interpersonal relationships are key; there is more emphasis on saving face. The Australians become more polite and less direct to avoid offending the Emiratis.</p> <p>Language is also very important. Expatriates should learn at least some Arab words.</p> <p>Misunderstandings can lead to problems. For example, a participant who completed this survey wrongly believed that "<i>Inshallah</i> means whenever". However, it does not, it means God willing. Muslims say <i>Inshallah</i> because they believe that nothing happens without God's will.</p>

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CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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Question 19	Any other suggestions/comments?
Summary and Commentary	<p>Most expatriates who found themselves in trouble placed themselves in the situation by assuming that they are one of the following (no particular order):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Above the law</li><li>2 Subject to home country law</li><li>3 that they can talk their way out of any trouble</li><li>4 Ignorant to local requirements and laws</li><li>5 Unable to comply with local requirements due to incompetent or unskilled to the needs of their position.</li></ol> <p>Ignorance is no excuse and expatriates should respect the laws, the culture and religion of the country they are in. Cross-cultural training could help those expatriates to adjust better and to be more productive in their jobs.</p>

**Source: Author, 2011**

#### 4.5 Survey Findings

The survey targeted 100 Australian (Western) project managers who are working in the UAE. The aim of the survey was to find out how different the UAE business and social culture is to the Australian culture and how and if that affects the performance of expatriates. Additionally, the survey focused on discovering why there is such a lack of cross-cultural training and preparation offered by companies to their staff. The survey also asked participants to write what is important to know before doing business in the UAE and what should be covered in cross-cultural training in order for it to be effective.

The survey indicated that there was a lack of cross-cultural training both before departure and on site. The training that was provided by some companies in most cases was not relevant, out of date and inadequate.

The UAE is a fast-paced environment and most companies do not want to spend time and money on providing that necessary training, as they believe that it is costly and unnecessary. Expatriates report that there is a *swim and sink* attitude to working in the UAE. What most companies fail to realise is that not appropriately training their staff will end up costing them more money as opportunities are lost because of lack of knowledge of the Arab culture and business etiquette.

The key findings of the survey are as follows:

- There is a lot that is important to learn and know about the UAE since doing business in the UAE is very different from doing business in Australia. The survey revealed that having an in-depth knowledge about the Arab culture, religion, laws, business etiquette, and socially appropriate behaviours is of great importance. Without that knowledge, Australians are not prepared for the Arab culture and their new life in the UAE and hence, they will struggle. This is reflected in both Figures 4.33 and 4.34, where it was revealed that Australians can at times find the Arabs frustrating, as Westerners find the Arabs are indirect, evasive, vague and avoid dealing with problems and/or risks. However, Arabs, on the other hand, are quite often irritated by Westerners who they consider frank and too direct, which can be interpreted by an Arab as being insensitive or rude.

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CROSS-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING OF AUSTRALIAN PROJECT MANAGERS WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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- This communication gap can be very frustrating to Westerners and they need to be more sensitive, learn more about the culture and know how to manage the new situations they find themselves in.
- As indicated in the survey findings, over 93 per cent of respondents agreed that having knowledge about the religion Islam is important (Figure 4.13). Islam's values are implemented in activities every day, socially and in business. Their religion guides Muslims by giving them a blueprint of what is socially acceptable, how to behave and how to live in harmony.
- Preparation of expatriates for the UAE climate was considered absolutely vital; yet as Figure 4.35 indicates, most expatriates do not receive any preparation for what lies ahead before they start work in the UAE. When it comes to expatriate preparation, 76 per cent of participants reported that they did not receive any training at all. An advantage to receiving preparation was that expatriates reported that proper and adequate preparation helped them quickly feel part of the community.
- There is a pattern in this data that suggests that most companies that offer cross-cultural training mainly offer intense inductions. The 24 per cent who reported that they were prepared by their company typically received an induction process, but it was reported that the inductions were quite vague and not particularly useful (Figure 4.35). Those induction workshops do not prepare the expatriates for the reality of life in the UAE. This means that the preparation that is provided to some expatriates was inadequate or insufficient. Preparation such as induction programs should be up-to-date and relevant. Since there was no time allowed for any sort of training, some companies employ the best people in their teams and expect them to perform and work well in the UAE, based on their existing knowledge and skill set.
- Most companies do not provide on-site training either. Figure 4.36 indicates that 61.4 per cent of expatriates report that they did not receive any cross-cultural training after they arrived in the UAE. By not offering adequate preparation to expatriates, the companies are not helping the expatriates to be good, effective and committed employees. If an expatriate is not able to work to his/her potential because the correct tools in the form of cross-cultural training and preparation have not been provided,

that expatriate is not going to make a good profit, deals, conduct the necessary networking, and so on, that they would otherwise have been able to achieve.

- Some companies hire human resource (HR) companies, which offer in-house training sessions, on cultural understanding and work ethics. However, according to the survey results these companies do not encourage their staff to go to these sessions. Additionally, the survey also uncovered a need for professional development training, but again, typically most companies do not provide this training.
- Post-training experience is considered important and companies should invest by assessing the post-training experience. In fact, 61.1 per cent of participants agree that testing for post-training experience would be beneficial (Figure 4.37). The testing of the post-training experience can indicate if the training is working and if it is not working then the training can be modified. Additionally, the cross-cultural training can provide feedback for suggested improvements and this way the post-training experience can be revised on a regular basis. In return, this helps the company save money and have well-trained employees who are able to deliver successful projects.

#### **4.5.1 Survey Limitations**

The survey was very helpful in providing rich information on cross-cultural project management as well as, helping the researcher develop questions for the case study interviews. However, since the questions were all answered anonymously by the participants who completed them, it was impossible to ask follow-up questions of the participants.

The time period to collect 72 valid and informative responses took 17 months. This is due to the fact that project managers and CEOs are busy people and they do not have much time to complete a 47 question survey.

As pointed out by researchers such as Moore (2006) and Yin (2003), a number of critical characteristics cannot be effectively captured in a survey. This is why, in addition to the online survey, data was also collected using six cases studies.

The next step is to analyse the collected (qualitative) case study data. Chapter Five will deal with the six case studies and their results.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

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### 5 Analysis of Case Study Data

In Chapter Four, the quantitative and qualitative survey data was analysed and discussed. This chapter now will analyse the case study data.

Firstly, the collected data was coded and then placed into tables to give a clearer overview of the data. There are many different ways in which data can be represented, but the researcher found out after many trial and errors that representing the data in a table format provides the best overview.

#### 5.1 Cases Study Data Collection

The case studies were based on chosen companies and organisations. These were selected based on the criteria that they had to be Australian (Western) companies or have their major headquarters in Australia with offices in the UAE.

Additionally, for these case studies the organisations approached needed to carry out a significant amount of project management and have a reasonable number of Australians in key roles working in the firm's UAE branches. The reason this was made a selection criterion was that this thesis focused on Australian project managers who were living and working in the UAE.

Once the case studies were selected, the appropriate people were contacted initially by email, then by a follow-up phone call, and then followed by in-depth semi-structured interviews. This preliminary interview was then followed by an email that asked some further questions which may not have been covered in the interview but were important for this research.

In some cases, once the interview was transcribed it was obvious that some questions needed to be answered in more depth and this is why emails with additional questions had to be emailed out to the respondents. The email questions were generally answered promptly and the data for each organisation was complete.

## **5.2 The Six Case Studies**

### **5.2.1 Case One**

Case one is one of the world's largest privately owned engineering and construction companies with offices across Australia, the UK, South East Asia and the United Arab Emirates. This company was founded in 1848, in the UK. It began operations in Australia in 2004 and it ventured to the UAE in 2006.

This company is 100 per cent privately owned, with more than 31,000 employees worldwide and a managed turnover of AU\$7 billion a year. In addition, Case one company has a sustainability software program entitled EPIC, which includes detailed and measurable criteria to ensure breakthrough in the areas of Environment, People, Industry and Communities (EPIC).

Case one company transfers key people across different countries from their various office locations to ensure that they provide world-class talent for their client's projects.

### **5.2.2 Case Two**

Founded in 1946, with an initial focus on structural engineering, this company first came to the world's attention with the structural design of an iconic building in Australia. The firm's portfolio today is broad and wide-ranging.

Case two organisation is a founding member of the Emirates Green Building Council (EGBC). Members of the Gulf team are also involved in the World Green Building Council proceedings and are instrumental in negotiations between the EGBC and the United States' GBC for the localisation of the sustainability rating system, LEED®, for the UAE.

Case two company has over 90 offices across Europe, North America, Africa, Australasia and South East Asia. It has tripled in size in the last ten years, and now has over 10,000 people worldwide. With projects all over the world and offices in over 30 countries worldwide, Case two company employs a diverse group of people from a range of cultural backgrounds. With a vast number of projects going on at any one time, Case two company has a complex environment to manage. Putting sustainability at the heart of its work is one of the ways in which this company exerts a positive influence on

the wider world. Every project that is designed at this company is designed with the future in mind by delivering sustainable projects.

This firm is a wholly independent organisation, and is owned in trust for the benefit of its employees and their dependents. With no shareholders or external investors, the firm is able to determine its own direction as a business and set its own priorities independently. Employees working for this firm receive a share of the firm's operating profit each year. This company has a group policy set by its Group Board. This body reports to the firm's trustees and to the firm itself, and is represented by a global college of directors and principals.

### **5.2.3 Case Three**

Case three company is one of the world's leading project management and construction companies operating in more than 30 countries worldwide and employing over 7,500 people. Case three organisation is listed on the Australian Stock Exchange. In addition, Case three company is one of the largest international integrated property companies. Using industry best practice, this company is trying to create high-quality sustainable property assets and they are committed to operating incident and injury-free wherever they have a presence.

This company's operations span over five continents, with regional businesses in Australia, United Kingdom, Continental Europe, Asia, Latin America and the United States, Caribbean, Africa as well as the Middle East. This firm holds a strong market position across all these regions in the commercial, retail, residential, industrial and pharmaceutical sectors and also works closely with governments to deliver health, education and defence projects.

This firm offers multiple services across the breadth of the design and construction project delivery process. Whilst these vary by region, their core capabilities lie in their strong project management skills and focus on value engineering. To drive value and ensure certainty of delivery for their clients.



This firm has been active in Continental Europe, Middle East and Africa since 1970 and has grown to be one of the region's leading providers of project and construction management services. They have a team of over 900 highly skilled professional staff operating in more than 20 countries across the region. As part of their commitment to sustainable construction, they also help their clients in the process of achieving LEED or other environmental certification for their projects.

#### **5.2.4 Case Four**

Case four company is an Australian development company based in Queensland, working in the residential, commercial, retail, funds management and hotel industry segments. This firm is currently expanding its operations internationally with significant projects in Dubai. This company is listed on the Australian Stock Exchange. Case study four company was founded in 1985 and it has expanded from a small engineering firm to a design/building firm with architectural, civil, environmental and structural engineering services. It also offers construction management, surveying and consulting to the commercial and government sector.

This firm has a portfolio that encompasses property development and construction, along with project services, funds management and hotel investments and operations. It has four main business segments with a geographic core that includes Australia and Dubai. The business segments are:

- 1 Australian and international property development;
- 2 Hotel investments and operations;
- 3 Project services, and
- 4 Funds management.

This company has built some of the most visually stunning, architecturally significant and well-known buildings in both Australia and the UAE.

### **5.2.5 Case Five**

Case five company is a global network of professional firms providing audit, tax and advisory services. It operates in 146 countries and has 140,000 people working in member firms around the world. This firm has been in the UAE since 1973. With over 700 professional staff and 23 partners, it operates from offices in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah.

This company plays an important role in the capital markets and is highly active in supporting positive reform within the financial industry to strengthen credibility and confidence. They believe corporate social responsibility is at the heart of all great organisations and are committed to making a real difference to the communities in which they operate. This is why this firm is trying to create sustainable, long-term economic growth, not just for its member firms and their clients, but for the broader society too.

### **5.2.6 Case Six**

Case six company is one of the world's most accomplished consultancy and construction firms, with a reputation for finding the best solutions to complex property and real estate challenges. This company was established in 1990. Since then the success of this company has led them to expand their skills and capabilities across more construction industry sectors. This firm is currently delivering some of the most inspiring projects and programs around the world, in roles such as consultant and manager to the contractor, and in every sector, from schools and airports to offices and railways.

Case six company provides a portfolio of property and construction-related services and has evolved into a multidisciplinary global consultancy and construction business over the past few years. It has also enjoyed significant growth with projects across Europe, Australia, Asia and the UAE. Staff numbers have increased from 800 in 2001 to over 2,800 people in 2009, operating in over 50 countries. The company continues to achieve significant market share in the commercial, aviation, arts, residential, regeneration, retail, utilities, rail, education, healthcare and local authority sectors.

Their progress is also driven by their commitment to sharing knowledge and always defining and employing the best industry practices.

**Table 5.1**      **Summary Table of Cases**

Case	Industry
Case One	World's largest privately owned engineering and construction companies
Case Two	Structural engineering
Case Three	Project management and construction company
Case Four	A development company, working in the residential, commercial, retail, funds management and hotel industry segments
Case Five	Global network of professional firms providing audit, tax and advisory services
Case Six	Consultancy and construction

Source: Author, 2011

### 5.3 Case Study Analysis

Table 5.2 deals with data that was collected from the six case study interviews. As explained in Chapter Three, the interviews were firstly transcribed, then coded and finally they were represented in table form.

Table 5.2 consists of 14 questions, which aim once again to get a better insight into cross-cultural training of expatriates and what can be improved or changed in order to deliver more effective cross-cultural training. Table 5.2 consists of two columns for each of the questions. The first column is for the case study number and summary and commentary; the second column is for the topic/question.

The researcher has tried to make the Table 5.2 straightforward, compact and understandable.

Table 5.2 consists of 14 questions and these are listed below:

- 1 Job title
- 2 Pre-departure cross-cultural training/preparation
- 3 On-site cross-cultural training/preparation (before departure)
- 4 If training was received, what was it on?
- 5 If no training was received, in your opinion what do you think can be done to help expatriates be prepared for work in the UAE?
- 6 Is cross-cultural training important?
- 7 What should be included in the training and how should it be delivered?
- 8 How does the Arab culture influence the practices that Australian project managers adopted when working in the UAE?
- 9 What are the five most important things Expatriates need to know before starting to do business in the UAE?
- 10 Do you deal with business contracts and, if yes, is knowing the law of the UAE important?
- 11 Self-preparation
- 12 Previous overseas experience
- 13 Challenges
- 14 Recruitment

The aim of these questions was to gain a better insight into the cross-cultural training of expatriates and what can be improved or changed in order to deliver more effective cross-cultural training. However, the interview questions also focused on other aspects of working in the UAE. These aspects included business contracts, challenges and how culture affects doing business in the UAE.

Please see Appendix E for the raw interview data.

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**Table 5.2 Case Study Analysis**

Topic/QUESTION	Case studies - Summary
<b>QUESTION 1: Job Title</b>	
	<p>Everyone in the six case studies started off as a project manager. All of them are Australians who are working or have worked in the UAE</p> <p>The six case studies are represented by a variety of fields, not just project management. Most (95%) of the project managers who were interviewed have worked in the UAE for a number of years in different fields. This information will give the researcher a better insight into how and if expatriates are getting cross-culturally prepared.</p>
<b>QUESTION 2: Pre-departure cross-cultural training/preparation</b>	
	<p>None of the interviewees had pre-departure training.</p> <p>One case study firm has started to offer pre-departure training in the form of a half-day briefing session in Australia.</p> <p><b>Pre-Departure training    No=6    Yes =0</b></p>
<b>QUESTION 3: On-site cross-cultural training/preparation (before departure)</b>	
	<p>The on-site departure training is important but it was either non-existent or insufficient in these six case studies.</p>
<b>QUESTION 4: If training was received, what was it on?</b>	
	<p>The training that was provided was not specific. It only gave the expatriates brief and superficial information about the UAE. It also only touched on culture, customs and business. It did not go into enough depth to be helpful - it was more informative than helpful</p>
<b>QUESTION 5: If no training was received, in your opinion what do you think can be done to help expatriates be prepared for work in the UAE?</b>	
	<p>In most cases there was no pre-departure training offered and 90% of the participants suggested that there should have been on-site cross-cultural training offered to them. The training could have helped them deal better with their new surroundings. Having a mentor, for example, would be very useful. This can be an expatriate who has been working in the UAE for a number of years - someone who can offer constructive feedback and advice.</p>
<b>QUESTION 6: Is cross-cultural training important?</b>	
	<p>All case studies agreed that cross-cultural training is important.</p> <p><b>Cross-cultural training    No=0    Yes =6</b></p>

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### QUESTION 7: What should be included in the training and how should it be delivered?

- Training is recommended to include a mentoring-coaching development system at the new destination combined with information sessions prior to departure.
- Information sessions should consist of at least one half-day program in a workshop format plus other shorter sessions and should be conducted before leaving for the UAE. These should include information on:
  - Geographical, cultural and lifestyle information about the new country. It is vital that this information must be relevant and useful and it is recommended that it is provided someone who has first-hand experience
  - Appropriate body language and workplace communication
  - Arabic mannerisms and cultural awareness of specific items that could easily offend Muslims, preferably taught by an Arabic person with experience with expatriate culture
  - A specific program of cultural preparation including appropriate cultural and business etiquette
  - Training should be delivered by experienced expatriates or should include video and comments and collected data, making training more entertaining and engaging
- To encourage participation in a coaching-mentoring program, a system could be instituted so that before an expatriate can be promoted within a company, the expatriate needs to have done 50 hours of coaching or mentoring. Any coaching or mentoring the expatriate does overseas in respect to transition will be added to that. This should provide incentive and motivation for expatriates to volunteer.
- Once in the UAE, it may be beneficial to have a refresher course at three months, six months and after that annually.
- On-site training combined with a mentoring-coaching development system would make sure that there is someone expatriates can approach and talk to if they have a problem or don't understand something.
- A network and support base is very important.

### QUESTION 8: How does Arabic culture influence the practices that Australian project managers adopted when working in the UAE?

There were no major differences in the project management practices in the UAE compared to Australia discovered in the case studies. However, Arabic culture in the UAE can influence projects so learning about the culture and business etiquette is of high importance.

### QUESTION 9: What are the five most important things expatriates need to know before starting to do business in the UAE?

Culture is the most important factor to know about before moving to the UAE.

The other important items were:

- How to deal with culture in a business environment
- An understanding of cultural attitudes
- Finding a good and supportive group of friends
- Not getting carried away with the lifestyle

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**QUESTION 10: Do you deal with business contracts and, if yes, is knowledge of the law of the UAE important?**

All six case studies deal with contracts. As indicated by their answers, knowing the laws of the country is important.

If the law of the country is followed it is easy to avoid possible difficulties. However, if expatriates do not know the law or do not respect it they can easily break it and get in a lot of trouble.

**QUESTION 11: Self-preparation**

There are currently things the expatriates could do themselves to prepare for their overseas assignment, for example reading books and talking to people who have been working in the UAE.

However, it can be quite challenging to do this kind of self-preparation as the expatriates need to look for the appropriate books and training materials as well as finding free time to study the culture. One would need to be highly motivated with a lot of free time to do so.

It is obvious from the six case studies that training is of high importance and should be provided by the companies.

**QUESTION 12: Previous overseas experience**

All six case studies had previous experiences working overseas.

Another pattern emerged from the research – two out of the six case studies have a mixed family background. Both have parents for whom English is not their first language and they were not brought up in an Anglo-Saxon culture, even if they were born in Australia. They reported that they were able to mix with the locals much easier than their Anglo-Saxon Australian co-workers.

**QUESTION 13: Challenges**

Most of the challenges experienced by the expatriates were due to the lack of knowledge on how things are done in the UAE compared to Australia. Those mental challenges could be avoided or minimised with the appropriate training and preparation of expatriates. A social network and support group would be very helpful as well.

The extreme heat and the ice-cold air-conditioned offices can also be physically challenging.

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**QUESTION 14: Recruitment**

The expatriates in those case studies were all been recruited in different ways.

Most had a phone interview while still in their home country.

Case Study 5 was a company that has been in the UAE since the 1990s. Case Study 5 recruits their staff by doing an initial phone interview where they run through most of the difficulties that will come with working in the UAE. They look for people who have the skills set that is required to do them. In addition, people who are known by the company's staff or who have worked previously on project with staff from the company have priority for employment.

They also take the age and maturity level of the potential employee into consideration.

All of their senior managers do a personality profile, specially carried out by a consulting company to make sure that the person is the right fit for the job.

**Source: Author, 2011**



## 5.4 Training

Luthans and Doh (2009:492), defined training as the “*process of altering employee behaviour and attitudes in a way that increases the probability of goal attainment*”. Researchers such as Blino and Feldman (2000) believe that preparation of personnel by providing training is extremely beneficial because it ensures that their full potential can be reached. Training can help expatriates to better understand the culture, customs and the work ethic of their host countries. Hickins (1998) believes that training alone cannot help; the right personnel also need to be selected to do the job. Individuals who have grown up in diverse cultures, have open and flexible minds, who will be able to deal with high degrees of stress and who are willing to learn, are the expatriates that should be selected for overseas assignments (Hickins, 1998).

Solomon (1994) conducted a review of 228 multinational companies (MNC) and her findings indicate that those companies need well-designed training programs that are administered before and after the individuals leave their home country, if they want their expatriates to succeed overseas. The topics that are covered in cultural training programs are usually customs, history, economics, politics, business and social etiquette. However, this is not good enough in countries that have distinctive business practices and specific cultural situations (Luthans, et. al., 2009).

According to Adler (2001), cultural differences are too important in international business to be ignored or denied. Learning about different cultures by facilitating and diffusing cultural synergies is considered critical to economic success by researchers such as Adler and Bartholomew (1992).

Forster (2000) believes that pre-departure cross-cultural training can help expatriates to adapt to living and working conditions in their host country. However, researchers such as Brewster, 1995; Waxin and Chandon 1997; Selmer, 2000 and Waxin, 2004 all point out that the cross-cultural training which is provided by most companies is simply insufficient, incomplete or simply non-existent. Briody and Chrisman (1991), Mendenhall and Stahl (2000) and Selmer (2001), researched an alternative to pre-departure training, that is training in the host country. This, however, does not mean that pre-departure training is not necessary. As Black, et. al., (1992) point out, pre-departure

training is indispensable. However, it would be more effective if it were to continue in the host country.

According to Shumsky (1992), the reason companies do not provide training to expatriates is because often the people who make these decisions do not have international experience and believe that training is a useless experience rather than the necessity that it is. In addition, Cerdin (1996) found that if cross-cultural training is not provided by companies, most expatriates will not attempt to train themselves.

### **5.5 Cross-cultural Training and its Effects on Cross-cultural Adjustment**

Cross-cultural adjustment is the degree of psychological comfort felt by an individual with several aspects of a new environment (Black, et. al., 1990; Parker and McEvoy, 1993; Caligiuri, 2000). In 1988, Black came up with three facets of cross-cultural adjustment:

1 Work adjustment

- Performance
- Responsibility
- Supervision

2 Relational adjustment

- Interaction with members of the host country

3 General adjustment

- Host country life conditions

These three facets of cross-cultural adjustment have been confirmed by many researchers (Black and Stephens, 1989; Black et. al., 1991; Parker, et. al., 1993; Waxin, 2000). Waxin (2000), studied the different effects of cross-cultural training on the three facets and believes that the expatriate's country of origin has a direct and significant effect on the three facets of adjustment.

Researchers and cross-cultural psychologists such as Brislin (1979), Brislin and Petersen (1986), Mendenhall and Oddou (1991), have identified three methods of cross-cultural training;

1 Cognitive

- Delivers information by using conferences or non-participative sessions on the host country

2 Affective

- Deals with critical cultural incidents by provoking the individual

3 Behavioural

- Helps individuals adapt their communication style
- Helps individuals establish relationships with members of the host country

## 5.6 Learning

Luthans (2004) wrote that another important area of consideration for developing the cross-cultural training for expatriates' was the different learning styles of individuals. Learning is the acquisition of skills, knowledge and abilities that result in a relatively permanent change in behaviour (Luthans, 2004). Researchers such as van Reine and Trompenaard (2000) have discovered that different national cultures prefer different learning styles and environments, and for training to be successful the company needs to deliver the cross-cultural training in the most effective manner. They have noted that, for example, Americans prefer an experimental approach while Germans prefer a theoretical-analytical learning style. It should be also noted that no matter how good the training was, the new learned behaviours would not be used if they were not reinforced.

Over the past 30 years, better paradigms for social learning theory and cultural theory have emerged. Using these theories increases the impact and the likely success of cross-cultural training (Black, et. al., 1990; Kim, 1993; Bhawuk, 1998).

Pruegger and Rogers (1994) suggested that interpersonal methods are more effective than didactic training programs. Waxin, et. al., (2002), found that globally the most

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effective type of learning about a culture is by experimental training. However, Waxin, et. al., (2002:69) also points out that the method of training should be specifically tailored “to the cultural distance between the expatriate’s country of origin and the host country”. In addition, Vance and Paik (2002) point out that for cross-cultural training to be effective it should be consistent with the cultural characteristics of the host country. Companies would also benefit from using their former expatriates as trainers, as those former expatriates have been there and can put themselves in the shoes of the new expatriates (Harris, 1989).

### 5.7 Selection Criteria of Expatriates for International Assignments

The factors for choosing personnel for the overseas assignment should be based on international selection criteria. These selection criteria differ depending on the country and the company. Usually the selection is influenced by the company’s experience and, more often than not, is culture-based (Luthans, et. al., 2009). Companies also need to consider both technical and human criteria when selecting expatriates. Figure 5.1 has a list of ten common criteria used by companies when selecting expatriates for overseas assignments.

**Figure 5.1** Criteria for Expatriate Selection

Rank of Criteria in Expatriate Selection			
	Australian Managers (n = 47)	Expatriate Managers* (n = 52)	Asian Managers (n = 15)
1. Ability to adapt	1	1	2
2. Technical competence	2	3	1
3. Spouse and family adaptability	3	2	4
4. Human relations skill	4	4	3
5. Desire to serve overseas	5	5	5
6. Previous overseas experience	6	7	7
7. Understanding of host-country culture	7	6	6
8. Academic qualifications	8	8	8
9. Knowledge of language of country	9	9	9
10. Understanding of home-country culture	10	10	10

\*U.S., British, Canadian, French, New Zealand, or Australian managers working for an MNC outside their home countries.  
Source: From Raymond J. Stone, “Expatriate Selection and Failure.” Reprinted with permission from *Human Resource Planning*, Vol. 14, Issue 1, 1991, by The Human Resource Planning Society, 317 Madison Avenue, Suite 12509, New York NY 100198.

Source: Luthans, et. al., (2009:476)

Figure 5.1 indicates that personnel who are sent overseas must be able to adapt to change, and according to Luthans, et. al., (2009) they also need a degree of cultural

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toughness. Most research shows that the majority of expatriates seem to suffer from a culture shock after the initial arrival 'honeymoon period' wears off (Ratiu, 1983). However, culture shock might also be a good sign, as it can indicate that the expatriates are getting involved with the new host culture.

Other criteria that should be considered when selecting expatriates are their age, experience and education. Heller (1980), also points out that younger managers are eager for international assignments. However, more often than not, younger managers are frequently the least developed in management experience and technical skills. In the past, companies have made their selections based on the technical competence of the expatriate. Technical competence is important, but it is only one of a number of skills that an expatriate will need to succeed in the host country. If the company only selects an expatriate based on his/her technical skills, the company is setting the expatriate up to fail, because the expatriate will go overseas believing that they are sufficiently prepared and ready for the overseas assignment. However, they will not be able to deal adequately with the challenges awaiting them, and hence, will fail. Additionally, companies usually want the personnel to have an academic degree as well as, the desire to work abroad and older workers usually have more academic qualifications. Over the years, companies have realised that a balance is important, and this is why they send both younger as well as seasoned personnel overseas (Luthans and Doh, 2009).

According to Tu and Sullivan (1994), personnel that are planning to go overseas should assess themselves for their readiness to become expatriates. This can be done in three phases:

- Phase one: Self-evaluation and general awareness
  - In this phase the individual asks him/herself: is this international assignment really for me?
- Phase two: Technical and cultural training
  - Learn about the customs, language and etiquette, develop cultural awareness

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- Phase three: Activities that one needs to do after being selected
  - If possible visit the host country before moving there, as well as, talk to people who have worked in the region and ask for advice

In the recent years, international human resource management specialists such as Black, et. al., (1991), as well as Bonache, et. al., (2001), have developed a model that helps underpin the effective selection of personnel for overseas assignments by making the selection criteria more effective. This model identifies two types of adjustment: the ‘anticipatory adjustment’ and the ‘in-country adjustment’.

Firstly, the anticipatory adjustment is carried out before the expatriate leaves the home country and it is influenced by a number of important factors, such as, pre-departure cross-cultural training, which is designed to familiarise expatriates with the culture and work life of the host country. Additionally, the expatriate’s previous experience in living in the new country, or a country that is similar in culture, will also affect the anticipatory adjustment.

The in-country adjustment has five factors that influence it;

- 1 The first factor is the expatriate’s ability to stay positive, to deal well with stressful and high-pressure situations and to interact with the host nationals to better understand the host culture and values.
- 2 Secondly, the expatriate should be clear about the job.
- 3 The third factor is the organisational culture, and how well the expatriate can adjust to it.
- 4 The fourth factor is a no-work factor, and it is looking at how the expatriate faces the new cultural experience and how well the expatriate and his/her family can adjust to the host country.
- 5 The final factor identified in the ‘in-country adjustment mode’ is for the expatriate to socialise and quickly find out who is who in the host organisation.

After analysing the relationships between host nationals and expatriates, Caligiuri (2000) reported that greater interaction with host nationals positively relates to cross-

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cultural adjustment when the expatriate possesses the personality trait of openness. Caligiuri (2000), states that the personality trait of sociability was also positively related to cross-cultural adjustment.

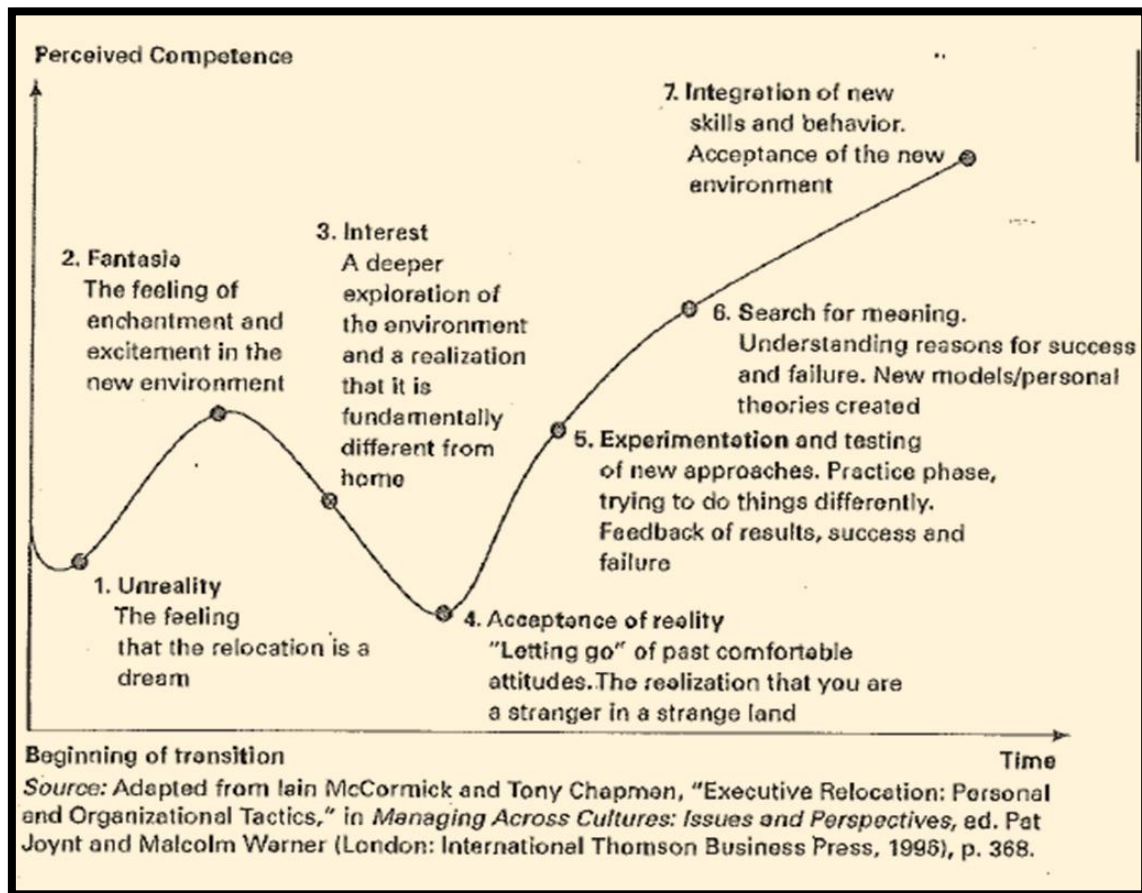
Church (1982), Black (1988) and Parker, et. al., (1993), show the importance of prior international experience, since this previous experience tends to lower the difficulties related to work adjustment. In addition, the assumption could be made that expatriates with prior international experience would perhaps need less cross-cultural training than those with no international experience.

According to McCormick and Chapman (1996), anticipatory and in-country adjustment will have an influence on the expatriate's mode and degree of adjustment. Figure 5.2 shows the transition that expatriates go through after they arrive in a foreign country. There will always be ups and downs in a cross-country move to a new job, but with appropriate cross-cultural training and support the expatriates can adjust to the foreign country and integrate much faster.



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**Figure 5.2** Transitions Which Expatriates go Through



Source: Luthans, et. al., (2009:483)

The faster the expatriates are integrated, the quicker they can perform their allocated tasks to their full potential. Additionally, if the expatriates do not integrate and if they start to feel depressed, they are unlikely to succeed in the UAE, or anywhere else. Hence, appropriate cross-cultural training is of the utmost importance.

### 5.8 Reasons for Training

The literature review exemplified that there are many reasons why cross-cultural training is important. Figure 4.34 too illustrates that most (92.2%) of the expatriates believe that cross-cultural training is vital and necessarily. From a company perspective, if their personnel are adequately trained for the overseas assignment they will be more successful, thus increasing the overall efficiency and profitability and the company will avoid losing money. Furthermore, the company can overcome the belief that their way of doing things is superior to that of others and this in turn can help the company to improve and gain a comparative advantage in the market. Additionally, cross-cultural



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training helps personnel to improve their interpersonal skills, their knowledge and skill sets and to be able to interact effectively with local people and co-workers.

Shenkar (1995) also offers the following guidelines to help expatriates to better understand Arab executives:

- 1 Arab executives are seen as the community and family leaders, and this role has numerous social pressures. The Arab executive will be most likely consulted on all types of problems, even those far removed from their position. This indicates that the Arab executives have a close relationship with their environment and the group.
- 2 With regards to decision-making, Arab executives most likely will consult with their subordinates, but will arrive at the final decision by themselves, possibly without consensus. The Arab manager will also take responsibility for the decision.
- 3 In Arab culture saving face is important; this is why an Arab executive will most likely avoid conflict. The Arab executive will, however, impose their authority if there is an issue that they favour, but which is opposed by their subordinates. If it is an issue which is favoured by executives but not by the subordinates, the Arab executive most likely will not take any action and will drop the issue.
- 4 Many Arab executives tend to look at employees as family. Their executive style is very personal and they value loyalty over efficiency.
- 5 The Arab executive values time and will encourage the employees to make more productive use of their time.

Not offering cross-cultural training at all is associated with higher expatriate failure rates (Nobel, 1997). According to Tang (1982) and Nobel (1997), US companies tend to train their expatriates less than their European and Japanese counterparts. Research also indicates that some Anglo-Saxon countries, for example the US and Australia, place less emphasis on language training since they believe that speaking English is sufficient. In addition to that, the focus on interpersonal skills and cultural sensitivity in their training programs seems to be much less than elsewhere (Dowling, et. al., 1999). Research

conducted by Peterson, et. al., (1996) confirms that the lack of training provided to American expatriates compared to European and Japanese expatriates is the cause of higher US expatriate failure rates. Global companies can increase their success rates by adequately training expatriates, thus creating a pool of global managers with citizenships from anywhere in the world (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 2000; Fulkerson and Schuler, 1992).

Black, et. al., (1990, 1991) and Deshpande and Viswesvaran (1992), as well as many other researchers in this discipline as referenced in the literature review, all agree that cross-cultural training is positively linked to improving the relationships between expatriates and host nationals.

Some researchers, such as Shaffer and Harrison (1998), suggest that if the expatriate does not adjust to their expatriate life and international assignment satisfactorily, they will be unable to function well and they almost certainly will return home or to the parent company prematurely. Adjustment problems can be minimised through careful selection and training. Cross-cultural training as well as language training is especially important (Forster, 2000).

Stroh, et. al., (1994) as well as Kramer, et. al., (2001) support this argument by explaining that expatriates are more likely to complete their overseas assignment if they are well-prepared for it, which, in turn will lead to the expatriate being better adjusted to a foreign environment and more likely to complete their overseas assignment

However, despite all the positive outcomes associated with cross-cultural training, many companies choose not to use it to prepare expatriates for their UAE assignments (see Figures 4.35 and 4.36). In some cases, companies provide only minimal training. The training those companies provide is often incomplete, insufficient or simply non-existent (Brewster, 1995; Waxin et. al., 2005; Selmer, 2000). Even though any training is better than no training at all, it is still not enough to adequately prepare expatriates. Foster (2000) argues that even though cross-cultural and language training is important, it is very often neglected by companies, because they are in a rush to deploy the expatriates.

### 5.9 Content of Training Programs

As illustrated by Black et. al., (1990), there is strong evidence that suggests that cross-cultural training is a critical factor in the preparation of expatriates on their overseas assignments. Tung (1979) suggests that the best and most effective cross-cultural training would have to be specific and should focus on a particular population and situation. For this reason, it would be logical for Australian companies and organisations to provide their employees with specific cross-cultural training that deals in detail with the UAE population and project management.

This cross-cultural program would have to focus exclusively on the UAE culture, religion, and on how to practice project management in the UAE. It would also have to cover laws in the UAE, the most appropriate leadership styles and work ethics.

Emiratis take business personally so it makes sense to learn as much as possible about the host country's culture in order to be able to avoid misunderstandings and conflict.

There are three phases of expatriate training: the pre-departure phase, on-site phase and the repatriation phase (Dunbar and Katcher, 1990). Many researchers in the area of cross-cultural training agree that in order for expatriates to succeed in their overseas assignments, they should have either pre-departure and/or on-site training (Warren and Adler, 1977; Tung, 1982; Black et. al., 1990; Weaver, 1998; Gudykunst, Guzley, Hammer, 1996; Ferraro, 1998; Caligiuri, et. al., 2001).

Cross-cultural training is important and effective in preparing expatriates for their overseas assignment as well as, helping them succeed in the UAE. The preparation of expatriates would enhance their capability to successfully work and deal with foreign environments (Zakaria, 2000). In addition, it should be pointed out that adequate expatriate preparation can reduce or even prevent expatriate failure (Giacolane and Beard, 1994).

### 5.10 Case Study Findings

Just like in the survey findings, all six case studies agree that cross-cultural training was important, yet in most cases cross-cultural training was not provided or, if provided, was insufficient.

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The case studies have also pointed out that moving to an unfamiliar country which has a different set of rules, beliefs and culture can be very daunting. This was why some believe that employing expatriates with previous overseas experience was important, especially if there was no training in place. This does not mean that cross-cultural training should not be offered, it only means that this is another method used by some companies to try and avoid people failing. They were more likely to fail if they had not previously worked overseas and had not received any cross-cultural training at all.

However, it was not always possible to only hire staff that had previous overseas experience; also these staff may not have received any cross-cultural training on their previous overseas assignment. This was why cross-cultural training is important. The reason for mainly focusing on cross-cultural training as opposed to technical skills training was because expatriates in both the survey and the case studies reported that there were no or few, differences regarding the technical side of project management.

Additionally, the participants made recommendations on how the cross-cultural training should be delivered and what should be covered in it; this will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

The key findings of the case studies were:

- Pre-departure cross-cultural training was nonexistent;
- On site cross-cultural training was either non-existent or insufficient;
- Most of the challenges were due to the lack of knowledge on how things are done in the UAE compared to Australia;
- Culture was the number one most important factor to know about before moving to the UAE;
- There were no major differences in the project management practices in the UAE compared to Australia. However, Arab culture can influence projects so learning about the culture and business etiquette was also of high importance;
- Cross-cultural training is indispensable and it should be provided to all expatriates, and

- Pre-departure and on site cross-cultural training needs to be relevant, useful and up-to-date.

Many recommendations have been made on what should be included in the cross-cultural training and how it should be delivered. This will be discussed in much more detail in Chapter Six.

#### **5.10.1 Case Study Limitations**

Even though the data collected from the cases studies was invaluable, this type of research is very time-consuming. The alternative was a personal visit, but this was too expensive as the researcher would have had to go to the UAE for a few weeks to collect the necessary data. So, the researcher often had to wait for the participants to come to Australia in order to conduct the interviews. This, again, was very time-consuming.

Nevertheless, the case study approach was considered the best method for this type of research, as the information that was collected in the end was deep, rich, informative and above all, very useful for this thesis.

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## CHAPTER SIX

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### 6 Recommendations

#### 6.1 A Synthesis of Recommendations

In this chapter, the researcher will synthesise all the recommendations that were collected from the literature, the data collection surveys and the six case studies.

The literature strongly advises that cross-cultural training should be provided to expatriates before they are sent overseas to work. Adequate and appropriate cross-cultural training will prepare expatriates to deal better with the new and unfamiliar environment. Additionally, proper pre-departure preparation will give the expatriates an idea of what to expect in the new location, hence, the initial culture shock will be minimised.

Without adequate and appropriate cross-cultural training expatriates are more likely to fail.

If the expatriate was to fail, this would have negative financial implications for both the expatriate and his/her employer.

There is also the non-financial effect of failure, such as loss of business opportunities and damage to the company's reputation. There are also psychological issues associated with failure. The expatriate will, most likely have lower self-confidence and damaged self-esteem.

Any cross-cultural program should focus exclusively on the UAE culture, religion, and on how to practice project management in the UAE. It is very important that the programs also have to cover the laws in the UAE, leadership and ethics. Emiratis take business personally. So, it makes sense to learn as much as possible about the host country's culture in order to be able to avoid misunderstandings and conflict.

- The research conducted for this thesis has uncovered three stages of expatriate training:
- The pre-departure stage;
- On-site stage, and
- The repetition stage.

In this chapter those stages will be described in more detail.

## **6.2 The Pre-departure Stage**

As indicated in the literature, the online survey and the case studies, cross-cultural training is important and time should be spent to appropriately train and prepare expatriates. The better expatriates are prepared for their overseas assignments, the more likely they are to succeed and complete successful expatriate assignments.

Researchers such as Stroh, et. al., (1994) and Kramer, et. al., (2001) point out that expatriates are more likely to complete their overseas assignment if they are prepared for it. Which in return will lead to the expatriate being better adjusted to a foreign environment and therefore more likely to complete their overseas assignment. Black and Mendenhall (1990) suggest that the cross-cultural training programs are necessary and are positively linked to expatriate development and job performance.

Forster (2000) believes that pre-departure cross-cultural training can help expatriates to adapt to living and working conditions in their host country. Pre-departure training is indispensable. However, it would be more effective if it were to continue after their arrival in the host country.

Cross-cultural training was recommended by the cases studies as well as the survey results, which suggest that before expatriates go to the UAE; their employer should offer at least a half-day briefing session in Australia. Training should be delivered by people who have the appropriate experience, such as expatriates who have been through it themselves, and it should include videos and a 'Launch Pack' on the UAE. That way, the training can be made into an interesting and enjoyable activity. In addition to having

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an expatriate doing the briefing session, an Arab male or female should teach the expatriates the basics, in a workshop format.

The training should cover geography, history, a review of the religion (Islam), some Arabic language, body language, work place communication, culture and lifestyle. Arabic mannerisms and cultural awareness of specific items that could easily offend the Muslims should be also included. These are given in more detail later on in this chapter. Cultural and business etiquette also needs to be learned before starting to do business in the UAE. The information provided in the training sessions and Launch Pack must be relevant and useful.

Most of the challenges expatriates experience are due to the lack of knowledge on how things are done in the UAE compared to Australia. Those mental challenges could be avoided or minimised with appropriate training and preparation of expatriates. A social network and access to support groups would be helpful as well.

Expatriates need to be provided with all the relevant and up-to-date information in order to be able to make an informed decision; on if they want to work and live in the UAE before they leave their home base.

The Launch Pack needs to be specific to the UAE. The information it needs to contain is outlined in the following section.

### **6.2.1 The Pre-departure Information**

All six case studies agree that cross-cultural training is important. The literature review, the surveys and the cases studies reveal that the following information would be useful and should be offered to the expatriates at the pre-departure stage, in the form of a Launch Pack:

- A company overview with information on the key people, such as their contact details and their photos
- Some information on the geography of the UAE and more detailed information, for example maps, on the Emirate where the expatriate will live and work
- A brief history of the UAE and its population



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- The time differences in the UAE , UAE climate and useful Arabic phrases
- A list of UAE public holidays, with a brief explanations on what the holidays represents
- A guide to customs and etiquette
- A list of international relocation companies
- Visa information for the UAE. This should be country-specific. For example, if an Australian is moving to the UAE, they need to be provided with information regarding tax and working visas for the area they are moving to
- Accommodation information, such as; is the company providing the accommodation? If not, how much does accommodation cost to rent? Which areas are good to rent in? How much is rent on average (in the different areas)? If accommodation is provided by the company then the location needs to be given. Otherwise accommodation information in the form of property advice is needed. Is it necessary to provide a property bond and up-front payments (these can be onerous in the UAE)?
- A list of required official documents and instructions to have the correct and valid documents. For example, a valid passport for the expatriate, their spouse and their children is necessary, visa and work permits need to be approved, driving licence(s) needs to be valid for at least the next six months
- A checklist of actions that need to be taken before moving. For example; appoint a power of attorney in Australia for any legal or financial administration
- Inform your solicitor of your move
- Speak to a financial advisor or accountant regarding taxes, an investment portfolio and pension
- Notify all relevant persons and institution about the move. For example, the bank needs to know about any address change and so does the doctor and schools, if the children are going to school, and so on

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- Arrange for copies of medical and dental records to be transferred as well as having all the appropriate health checks and vaccinations before moving to the UAE
- Arrangements to meet and greet with a representative of the company after arriving in the UAE
- Transfer to hotel or local accommodation – is the company sending someone to pick the expatriate up or is the expatriate getting a taxi?
- Office location (map)
- Office induction – this should be done on the first day of work. The expatriate should also be introduced to his or her mentor on the first day
- Transportation. For example, if a company car was not part of the package then car hire or rental information needs to be provided
- A checklist of necessary information for expatriates once they have arrived in the UAE, such as; how to connect the utilities, education information for expatriates with children, what healthcare is available, information on healthcare, useful tips, books, web sites and brochures.

All the information that is provided in the Launch Pack needs to be relevant and up-to-date. One more advantage of having a Launch Pack is that all relevant information such as phone numbers and who to contact is conveniently located in one booklet. Once on-site and after settling in, the expatriates will need to be provided with cross-cultural training workshops.

Additionally, it was recommended in the survey that expatriates need to have a realistic idea as to what it is like to live and work in the UAE. It is therefore recommended that, if possible, expatriates should visit the UAE before they move over there. The new expatriates can also help themselves by talking to other expatriates currently living and working in the country, which would help manage expectations and prepare them for their work.

All the findings on the pre-departure stage and the pre-departure information, lead the researcher to the first recommendation.

### **Recommendation One**

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*Offer cross-cultural training to expatriates before they leave to go on the overseas assignment and provide a Launch Pack to every expatriate.*

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### **6.3 The On-site Stage**

Cross-cultural training aims to assist expatriates enhance their knowledge and skills, which in turn will help the expatriate live and work in the unfamiliar host country and to be happier and more productive. Training can help expatriates to better understand the culture, customs and work ethics of their host country.

For developmental and functional reasons, successful expatriate assignments are invaluable to companies. It is no surprise that the expatriate management literature has paid a great deal of attention to the management of the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates.

In 1990, Black and Mendenhall, perhaps two of the best-known researchers in this area, suggested that the cross-cultural training programs are necessary and are positively linked to expatriate development and job performance. The intention of cross-cultural training is to supply expatriates with the skills and knowledge to allow them to integrate well in their new country and be more productive employees (Brewster and Pickard 1994, Kealey and Protheroe 1996, Harris and Brewster 1999). The six case studies confirm this view and indicated that on-site training was desirable. However, for most expatriates it was almost non-existent.

Once on-site, the expatriates should be given induction workshops. The induction is similar to a refresher course for what was done in the pre-departure training workshops. The difference is that preferably the induction should be spread over two half-days. The reason for this is that a whole day is considered too long for people and they cannot concentrate and absorb all the information presented. Hence, having the training for only half-a-day over two days would be much more effective. The program would be a specific culture preparation program, which would include a review of the construction

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industry in the UAE and whether and how the technical side of work is any different in the UAE compared to Australia.

Additionally, expatriates need to be taught specific technical skills required, as well as, how to keep out of trouble when they get to the UAE. Once they are in the UAE, they should also have a refresher course a short time later; at three months, then six months and then once a year.

Once the induction is over, each new expatriate would be assigned a mentor through the ‘mentoring, coaching and development system’. A mentoring, coaching and development system was strongly recommended by the six case studies.

This research suggests a mentoring, coaching and developing system would work the following way. Before one can get promoted to the next level within the company, that employee would need to complete 50 hours of coaching or mentoring new expatriates. They would need to have successfully coached or mentored somewhere between seven to ten new expatriates before they can get promoted. Essentially this is the ‘buddy system’, but for branding and selling purposes it will be called the ‘mentoring, coaching and development system’. Any coaching or mentoring the expatriate does overseas in respect of transition will be added to that. This encourages expatriates to volunteer their services and they may do it gladly.

The mentoring, coaching and development system has a couple of very useful advantages. Firstly, it will make sure that there is someone the new expatriate can approach if they need to talk, have a problem or do not understand something, their ‘buddy’ would be able to help. Secondly, this type of training acts as a repatriation phase for the mentor; this is why a mentoring program would be of utmost importance. Additionally, having this type of support base and network is very important, because the expatriate knows that there is someone who can help and they are not alone.

The findings on the on-side stage, lead the researcher to the second recommendation.

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**Recommendation Two**

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*Offer induction workshops to every expatriate and have a mentoring, coaching and development system in place.*

*Every new expatriate gets a mentor.*

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**6.4 The Repetition Stage**

According to Adler (2001), cultural differences in international business are too important to be ignored or denied. Learning about different cultures by facilitating and diffusing cultural synergies is considered critical to personal and economic success.

It is advisable that companies offer refresher workshops for their expatriates, because during their deployment expatriates will have different queries and needs, depending on how long they have been in the UAE for. Additionally, the second refresher workshop will make more sense to the expatriates than the first refresher workshop, because they would have lived in the UAE for nine months, and they will be able to relate better to what is being delivered in the subsequent workshop(s). This means that they will be able to benefit more from each subsequent refresher workshop.

All the findings from the survey and the case studies, lead the researcher to make the third recommendation.

**Recommendation Three**

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*Have the first refresher workshop three months after arrival.*

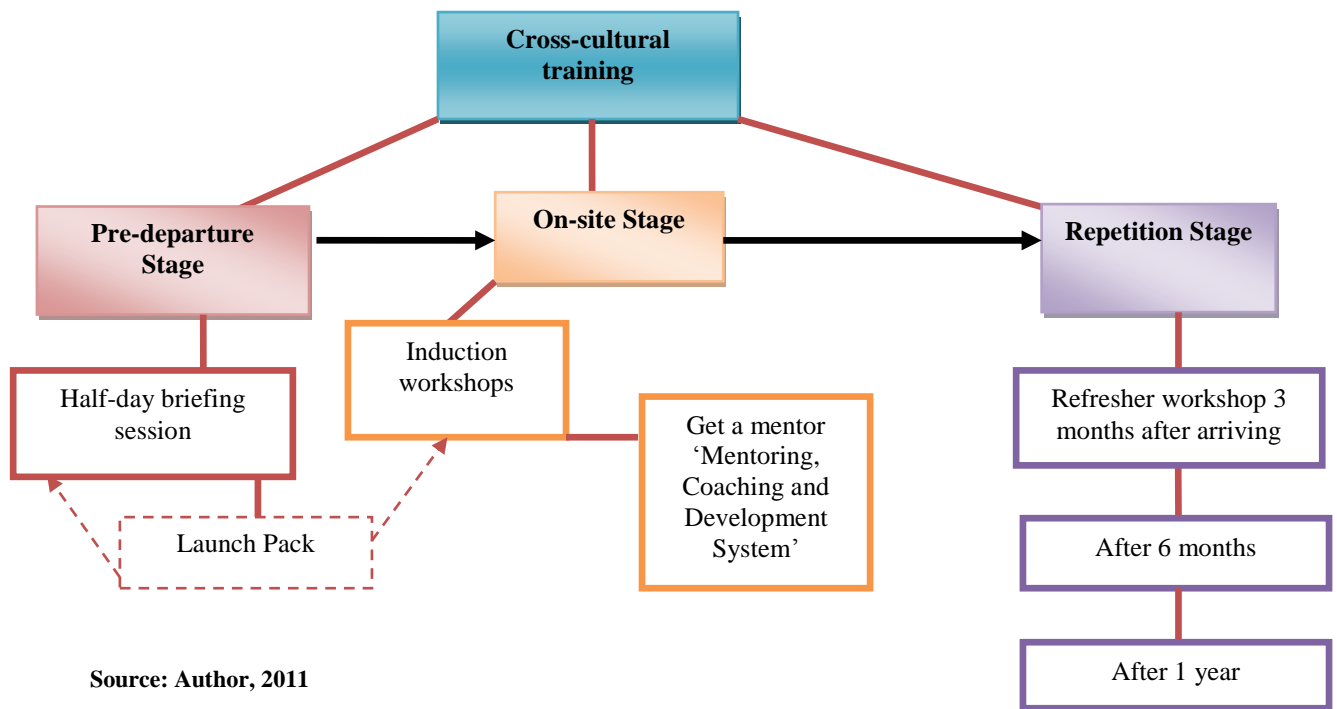
*Six months after the first refresher workshop, hold another refresher workshop.*

*The third refresher workshop should be offered one year the second refresher workshop.*

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The three recommendations lead the researcher to develop a cross-cultural training design, which is depicted in Figure 6.1, in diagram form. The proposal that was made in Figure 1.1, (the cross-cultural training blueprint) has been met by this research.

**Figure 6.1** Cross-cultural Training Design



Source: Author, 2011

## 6.5 Testing the Post Training Experience

It would be sensible to test the post training experience, to check if the training provided is beneficial to the expatriates. The survey revealed that most (61.1%) participants agree that testing for post-training experience would be beneficial (see Figure 4.37).

The testing of the post-training experience can indicate if the cross-cultural training is working. If it is not, then the training can be modified. Additionally, the post-training experience can provide feedback and suggested improvements. This way, the training is revised and updated on a regular basis and is therefore fully up-to-date. In return, this helps the company save money through the lack of expatriate failure and have well-trained workers who are able to deliver successful projects.

The post-training experience can be conducted by either the mentor who is mentoring the expatriate or by the expatriate's manager. The expatriate would not be asked to do a

self-assessment, as most individuals are unable to be objective when conducting self-assessment. Additionally, when this research was presented at the COBRA conference in Paris 2010, (see publication in reface) it was noted that the post-training experience was important and the assessment should be carried out by someone who works with the expatriate and not by the expatriate themselves, as people see themselves differently than they are perceived by others. Furthermore, most participants that completed the online survey agree that testing for post-training experience would be beneficial to their continuous professional development.

### **6.5.1 Self-Preparation**

There are currently things the expatriates could do themselves to get ready for their overseas assignment. They should read relevant books on their new destination and talk to people who have been working in the UAE.

However, it is challenging to do self-preparation as the expatriates need to find the appropriate books and training materials. They also need to have the free time to study the culture. One would need to be highly motivated and with a lot of free time to do this.

It is obvious from the six case studies that cross-cultural training was of high importance to the firms and the respondents, and it should be provided by the companies. The survey also revealed that preparation of expatriates for the UAE climate was considered absolutely vital. Nevertheless, 76 per cent do not get any pre-departure training; additionally 61.4 per cent report that they did not receive any training on-site either. Since proper and adequate preparation helps expatriates quickly feel part of the community, it is essential that training is provided. However, it is equally important that preparation such as induction programs should be up-to-date, relevant and interesting.

In the survey, expatriates were asked what is important to learn about the UAE and the Emiratis before starting to do business in the UAE. The respondents clearly noted that the culture was rated of high importance. Cultural awareness is the number one skill that is necessary in this environment and respecting the culture goes hand-in-hand with it. For example, expatriates need to learn everything they can about the country, its people, religion, customs, rules and regulations. Keeping updated with the rules and regulations is also very important as they change quickly.

Additionally, throughout this research it was found that personal relationships and trust are important. Hence, a lot of time and effort needs to be put into establishing that trust and confidence. Networking in the UAE is a must, and expatriates must maintain integrity and reputation. A bad reputation will result in reduced work or no work at all.

### **6.6 Previous Overseas Experience**

The representatives from all six case studies who were interviewed had previous overseas experience working all over the world, and not only in the Middle East.

It was pointed out by the six case studies that previous overseas experience is much desired by the companies that hire expatriates. Previous overseas experience was a good indicator of how and if the expatriate can deal with an unfamiliar/different environment, culture, work etiquette, and so on.

Moreover, expatriates with sufficient overseas experience are conditioned for living and working in an unfamiliar environment. Since they already have been exposed to a different country in the past, they learn a set of skills in adjusting to foreign environments and that set of skills can be transferred to any country they go to. Those expatriates know from experience that it is necessary to be able to adjust quickly and successfully to the new environment. What this means for the companies that hire expatriates with previous overseas experience is that they are more likely to have an employee who will stay and work in the country and will not return home prematurely or before they complete the job that they were assigned to do. This expatriate will also be able to work to their full potential, as the new environment will not be too daunting for them.

### **6.7 Recruitment**

The expatriates in the case studies were all recruited in different ways. Most had a phone interview while still in their home country and did not visit the UAE.

Case study five, whose company has been in the UAE for the last 30 years, did an initial phone interview where they ran through most of the difficulties that will come with working in the UAE. The company looks for people who have the skills set required to do the job successfully. In addition to that, people who are known by the company's



staff or who have worked previously on projects with staff from the company are prioritised for expatriate roles. They also take into account the age and the maturity level of the person they are considering employing. All of their senior managers do a personality profile, specially carried out by a consulting company to make sure that the person will fit the job.

### **6.8 Summary of Recommendations**

Cultural training is of prime importance if the expatriates are to succeed in the UAE. In addition to cross-cultural training, language study, a preliminary visit, discussions with local managers and the team they are going to work with and meeting with someone who has returned from the same posting are all necessary and essential. However, the most important factor is ensuring that the person they hire is the right person for the expatriate position.

All of these recommendations can be provided by the companies to help expatriates adjust and cope with the new environment and the challenges, which come with it.

Expatriates also need to be trained in trouble-shooting procedures, so they know what to do and who to contact when something breaks down or when they are faced with the frustration of bureaucratic red tape.

Chapter Seven will now conclude this thesis, and it will also take a look at the research limitations and future research possibilities.

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**CHAPTER SEVEN**

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**7 Conclusion****7.1 Introduction**

Our world seems to be becoming smaller with more and more people living and working overseas in countries that are very different to their home country. This gives rise to people from very different social and cultural backgrounds having to communicate face-to-face with each other and therefore the necessity of cross-cultural training has never been higher than now. Lack of cross-cultural training has negative effects on the expatriates, such as: inability to adjust to an unfamiliar environment, tasks that take longer than expected and projects being incomplete, only to name a few. Failure is not only detrimental to the individual, but it is very costly to the company and in many cases it is damaging to the company's reputation and can be damaging to the future of the company in the host country.

**7.2 Expatriate Preparation**

Although the UAE has a large expatriate population of about 80 per cent, most expatriates live in segregated communities. The majority of people tend to remain with people with a similar language and culture. For instance, Australians have their social private clubs, luxury beach clubs, sports clubs and bars and this is where they socialise with other Australians. Executive expatriates live in villas with pools, and they send their children to private schools, whereas the low-paid workers, who are usually from India, Pakistan and the Philippines, live in bleak workers' compounds. The type of employment and salary levels ensures that everyone moves in their own circles. Nevertheless, both well-paid and low-paid workers still need to adjust to an unfamiliar environment.

After analysing the relationships between host nationals and expatriates, Caligiuri (2000) reported that greater interaction with host nationals positively relates to cross-cultural adjustment. However, as demonstrated in Hofstede's findings, the Arab world is very different to Australia. This indicates that interaction with host nationals with a completely different cultural background could be challenging.

Hofstede (2003), points out that with an UAI of 68 out of 100 and a PDI of 80 out of 100, are the predominant characteristics for the Arab region. This indicates that it is anticipated that traditional leaders separate themselves from the group and issue complete and specific directives. This is due to the fact that these societies are more likely to pursue a caste or a class system that does not permit significant upward mobility of its people. They are also highly rule-oriented with laws, rules, regulations and controls in order to diminish the amount of uncertainty, while discrimination of power and wealth have been allowed to grow within the society. If one were to combine those two factors, a situation would arise where the people on the top (the leaders) would have ultimate authority and power.

Additionally, a high PDI ranking suggests a high level of inequality of power and wealth within the society. This society has a belief that leaders will separate themselves from the group and this condition is accepted by the society as their cultural heritage. Australia is relatively low in this dimension, with an index of 36, compared to the world average of 55. This is indicative of a greater equality between societal levels.

The high UAI ranking indicates that the Arab society has a low level of tolerance for uncertainty. In an effort to minimise or reduce this level of uncertainty, strict rules, laws, policies and regulations have to be, and usually are, adopted and implemented. If those rules and regulations are strictly implemented and followed by the society, those people can successfully avoid and/or eliminate the unexpected. As a result, most people from this region do not willingly accept change and are extremely risk-adverse.

The third highest Hofstede dimension in Arab countries is the MAS, with a ranking of 52 out of 100. This rank is about average on Hofstede's dimensions, which can be explained by the fact that when it comes to decision-making, people from the Arab world are more caring (feminine) than people with Western values.

The lowest Hofstede dimension for the Arab world is the IDV, ranking at 38 out of 100. The world average ranking for this dimension is 64. This implies that the Arab world is a collectivist society and this is apparent in the Arabs' close long-term commitment to group and family as compared to Australia, which has an individualist culture. In a collectivist society, loyalty is paramount and overrides most other societal rules.

Australia is the complete opposite when it comes to the IDV dimension. Hofstede's research indicates that Australia has very high levels of individuality. In fact, Hofstede scored Australia as 90 out of 100, the second highest score of any country in Hofstede's survey, with the United States rating the highest with a ranking of 91.

It is obvious from Hofstede's dimensions that Australia and the UAE are very different. If expatriates are not prepared and do not learn and know about the different cultural, social, religious, legal and business rules, one can easily fail and be unsuccessful.

It has become increasingly apparent that cross-cultural training is important in preparing expatriates for their overseas assignments. This training has long been advocated as a means of facilitating effective cross-cultural interaction between the expatriate and the host nationals. In the case of expatriates who do not get cross-cultural training or inadequate training they could 'fail' in their international assignment. An expatriate is considered to have failed if that individual has not completed the international assignment and if he/she needs to be replaced with a new expatriate. Expatriate failure does not only cause damage to the company, but it can also cause the expatriate to lose their job, limit future career prospects and cause low self-esteem. In order to eliminate expatriate turnover, this research has focused on cross-cultural training and preparation of Australian expatriate project managers working in the UAE.

### **7.2.1 Business and Arabic Characteristics**

Aside from meeting the challenges of new job responsibilities, Australian project managers also have to adjust to a new and unfamiliar social and business climate as well as a new culture. In this research, adjustment has referred to the process of the expatriate's ability to fit in, so that they can feel comfortable and at ease with the new surroundings. As discussed earlier, there are many reasons for expatriates to return home prematurely. Some of those issues can be dealt with or avoided if appropriate and adequate cross-cultural training is provided. As suggested by the six case studies, culture shock, for example, can be minimised and last for a shorter period of time if the expatriates are realistically prepared for what to expect, than if the expatriate did not get any preparation. The faster the expatriate gets over the culture shock and adjusts, the faster that individual can work at full capacity.

Certain Arabic characteristics need to be studied and expatriates need to appropriately prepare before starting to do business in the UAE. The circular approach to meetings and debate, polychronic time management and timing, the emphasis on hospitality, the importance of networking and the preference for making use of contacts, should be learned, understood, appreciated and followed.

### **7.2.2 Time and Timing**

The Arabs respect Westerners who arrive on time to meetings even if they (the Arabs) are late. However, to Arabs time is not as important as it is to Westerners. In the Arab world there is more emphasis on harmony. This means that in order to maintain harmony being late to meetings, delays and interruptions during meetings are common and are tolerated (see Figure 4.29).

However, the locals do recognise that delays, lateness, interruptions and that time is an unlimited resource that can cost them money and perhaps lose them business deals with outsiders. Nevertheless, being time-conscious and on time is hard for Arabs as they cannot do that at the expense of personal relationships. In addition, Arabs are classified as being ‘polychronic’ (multi-time) as opposed to most Westerners, who are ‘monochronic’ (single-time). This means that Arabs will have several meetings running at the same time, and expatriates need to get used to constant interruptions during meetings.

Arabs put more emphasis on ‘timing’ than ‘time’. Timing cannot be managed as it is sensed. Timing is all about how the parties get along, the mood of the meeting and trust that must be established in previous visits. This is one more reason why it takes many meetings and a long time to reach an agreement on an issue.

However, in some cases keeping someone waiting is used to demonstrate power, just like delays on a contract or a project can be a power tactic or a test of character. Expatriates need to learn to be flexible, patient and persistent when they want something done. Additionally, when expatriates are working out a project timeline, it needs to be stressed that being conservative will work in the expatriate’s favour and building in a big margin for error is equally important.

### 7.2.3 Risk and Decision-Making

Most of the UAE, with the exception of Dubai, is very risk-averse. Hence, this is why most company headquarters are in Dubai. The Kingdom continues to be the major force governing all aspects of the economy by having a high degree of regulation governing all areas of life and business. The UAE overall is reluctant to accept change.

In the UAE the leader, or the Sheik, is seen as the ‘father figure’ and that description characterises his leadership style: his decisions are absolute and are hardly ever questioned. The ‘father’ has the absolute power for his decisions, his vision and his approach rules and dictates the success and failure of the group. He expects absolute loyalty and any type of criticism is seldom tolerated.

The patriarchal nature of the Arab society means that the delegation of power is rare and precarious for those on the receiving end. Just like in Western countries such as the USA for example, in the UAE too decision-making, power, wealth and so on are concentrated in the hands of a few and they do not like to share. This is very obvious when it comes to labour laws and employment contracts that usually favour the employer, with the employees generally having very limited rights. Most of the labourers and contractors in the UAE are immigrant workers and foreign investors and business contracts leave them exposed, since they give power to the clients (usually an Emirati company). Despite significant improvements there are still a lot of issues and the *International Human Rights Watch* has hundreds of cases reported every week (Cerimagic, 2011).

### 7.2.4 Communications

Expatriates working in the UAE come from all over the world. This is why most business is done in English. It is important, however, to learn some Arabic and master some basic Arabic phrases and expressions; this shows respect and is much appreciated by the Arabs. Learning how Arabic numbers are written and spoken would also help expatriates to understand numbers and prices when negotiations are done in Arabic; it is also helpful for the basic task of getting around the country/city.

In some meetings there are people that do not speak English. In that case, a fully accredited translator can be provided by the local chamber of commerce and should be

used. Even when a translator is being used it is important to check that both parties understand what is happening. In cross-cultural dealings ‘it is not what you said, but what they have heard’ that is important. In a foreign country, one needs to listen with the ears, eyes and the heart. This means that paying attention to body language is very important in a society such as the UAE. Body language, such as gestures, has hidden meanings. Since the Arabs are high-context communicators, there is often multiple meaning to the words that they use. For this reason, body language and the mood of the meeting needs to be taken into consideration, not only what has been said. An example would be the word “*Inshallah*” (God willing). When an Arab says “*Inshallah*”, it can mean a vast number of things, such as “*Yes*”, “*No*”, “*Maybe*”, “*Someday*”, or “*Never*”.

Additionally, Arabs do not place much emphasis on written communication as they are a highly verbal society. This can work in the expatriate’s favour, as in face-to-face meetings body language (for example, eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, et cetera) can be observed and at the same time it can be checked for mutual understanding and the full meaning can be understood. It is also important for the expatriate to be an active listener. This means that when it comes to communication (unlike the West where written communication is preferred) the Arabs rather prefer personal visits, or phone calls when visits are not possible, believing these have more impact than a series of emails. Emails often get ignored, overlooked or take a very long time to be replied to.

Arabs are known for being hospitable and place a great deal of emphasis on outward expressions, and the Emiratis are no different. They love to entertain, and this is a great way to form a bond with the Emiratis. This is why invitations extended from Arabs to expatriates need to be accepted graciously and appropriate etiquette should be learned before attending the event. Once there is a bond established between the Emirati and an expatriate, the expatriate is considered as a friend and business dealings can commence.

#### **7.2.5 Relationships**

The Arabs place a big emphasis on relationships and a reliance on absolute trust when they are doing business. This is the basis for doing business in the UAE and this explains why they do not like to use formal written contracts (see Figure 4.27).

All six case studies also stated that in the UAE it is all about building and maintaining relationships. Once a relationship is established, it needs to be nurtured with frequent visits. Business is highly personal and relationships affect everything from negotiations, obtaining approvals, dealing with bureaucracy, the speed of getting things done, as well as recruiting and hiring. More than anywhere else, preparation is of the highest importance before starting to build relationships in the UAE.

### **7.3 Training and Learning**

Generally, research on training has been limited to the US, and it is not always applicable to other countries. Therefore, this research has specifically focused on the UAE and Australia. This research has discovered that cross-cultural training facilitates faster adjustment of Australian project managers in the UAE and contributes to their success.

All six case studies agree that, ‘yes, cross-cultural training is important’. However, the training that was provided by the case study companies only touched on culture, customs and business. It did not go into enough depth to provide adequate preparation; it was more informative than helpful. Additionally, the training that was provided was not specific to the UAE. It only gave the expatriates brief and superficial information about the UAE.

Additionally, all six case studies agree that the on-site departure training is important, but the six case studies also revealed the training offered by their companies was non-existent, incomplete or insufficient. In fact, the online survey revealed that 76 per cent of respondents did not receive pre-departure training (see Figure 4.35). Additionally, 61.4 per cent of respondents reported that even when they were on-site they did not receive any training (see figure 4.36). This means that 61.4 per cent of participants did not receive any training at all. Cross-cultural training is vital to the success of expatriates overseas and it should not be ignored by human resource managers and executives. As indicated by the respondents, not providing effective, up-to-date and efficient cross-cultural training could have devastating professional and personal consequences for both the expatriates and their companies.



Many researchers have conducted extensive studies that indicate that there is a positive relationship between cross-cultural training and the expatriate's ability to faster adapt to the new environment (Black et. al., 1990, 1992; Naumann, 1993). In fact, cross-cultural training is critical for expatriates who have little knowledge or understanding about the host nation's culture, work ethics and social etiquette. Cross-cultural training can help those individuals not only to adjust faster to the new country, but also to be more efficient, effective and successful in their overseas assignment. Through cross-cultural training, expatriates gain a better understanding and more knowledge about the host country and this in return enhances their self-efficacy; it reduces their anxiety levels and allows them to absorb culture shock. It thereby gives them an advantage over someone with no cross-cultural training, because the trained expatriates are familiar with the host country and this facilitates faster cross-cultural adjustment.

The cross-cultural training should include pre-departure training, on-site training and repetition training, where every few months a 'refresher' training workshop is offered. Training offers numerous advantages to the expatriate, including helping expatriates deal with culture shock and unexpected events better, and it also lessens the uncertainty of interactions with host nationals. It is understandable that companies struggle to develop an appropriate mental framework for their expatriates for dealing with unfamiliar cultures. However, they need to rectify this, as expatriates need a frame of reference in the form of cross-cultural training and mentors.

Researchers such as van Reine et. al., (2000) have discovered that different national cultures prefer different learning styles and environment, and therefore to deliver the training in the most effective manner, companies need to tailor their training. However, Waxin et. al., (2004:69) also point out that the method of training should be specifically tailored "*to the cultural distance between the expatriate's country of origin and the host country*". Thus, an understanding of Hofstede's dimensions would assist in this process. In addition, Vance and Paik (2002) point out that for cross-cultural training to be effective it should be consistent with the cultural characteristics of the host country. Companies would also benefit from using their former expatriates as trainers, as those former expatriates have been there, and can put themselves in the shoes of the new expatriates (Harris, 1989). Additionally, the former expatriates can act as mentors. A

mentoring, coaching and development system can be developed and new expatriates can be trained in that way.

The participants in this research have indicated that they prefer hands-on training and that they would like to have a mentor who they can approach and ask for help and advice when they need it.

### **7.3.1 Why Train?**

There are a vast number of reasons why cross-cultural training is important. According to Hofstede, when it comes to working in the UAE one needs to “*follow the rules of the culture you’re working with rather than the rules of your own culture*” (Hofstede 2006:24-39) and an understanding of the Arab culture is essential in order for the expatriates to follow the rules of the Arab culture.

Hence, providing cross-cultural training to expatriates is simply imperative for helping and supporting expatriates in their development and success overseas. From a company perspective, if personnel are adequately trained for their overseas assignments, they will be more successful and contribute to increasing the overall efficiency and profitability. The company could avoid losing money and staff through expatriate failure. In addition, the company can overcome the belief that their way of doing things is superior to that of others. The lack of cross-cultural training or no training at all, has been associated with higher expatriate failure rates.

Additionally, most companies do not give sufficient language training to their personnel. Even though most business is done in English, expatriates who only speak English, but are doing business in a non-English speaking country such as the UAE, are at a disadvantage.

The six case studies represented a variety of professional fields and activities, not only project management. This gave the researcher a better insight into if and how expatriates are being cross-culturally prepared. When asked about cross-cultural training, all six case studies have agreed that it is of high importance to provide expatriates with adequate, appropriate and up-to-date cross-cultural training.

The three training recommendations made in Chapter Six lead the researcher to design a cross-cultural training design, which is depicted in Figure 6.1, in diagram form. This cross-cultural training design has the potential to help Australian (Western) project managers understand and deal with business and Arab characteristic, time and timing, risk and decision making, communication and relationships and many other aspects of conducting business and living in the UAE.

#### **7.4 How to Opt for ‘Desirable’ Personnel**

Companies also need to consider both technical and human criteria when selecting expatriates. Expatriates that are sent overseas must be able to adapt well to change. The criteria that are most important to look at when selecting expatriates are primarily age, experience and education. Technical competence is important, but it is only one of a number of skills that an expatriate will need in a host country. If the company only selects expatriates based on their technical skills, the company may be setting the expatriates up to fail, because the expatriates will go overseas believing that they are project-ready, whereas due to the lack of adequate preparation, they may not be able to deal with the challenges awaiting them and chance of failure is likely to increase. In addition to technical skills, companies usually want the personnel to have an academic degree as well as the desire to work abroad. Over the years, companies have realised that a balance in experience and training is important, and this is why they send both younger as well as older personnel overseas.

Church (1982), Black (1988) and Parker et. al., (1993), show the importance of prior international experience, since this previous experience reduces the difficulties related to work adjustment. The assumption could be made that expatriates with prior international experience would perhaps need less cross-cultural training than those who have no international experience.

Research done by (Shaffer et. al., 1998; Waxin and Panaccio, 2005) also demonstrates that previous international experience is a positive factor for expatriate adjustment. The reason for this is that expatriates with previous overseas experience generally develop a skill set that helps them deal better with new and unfamiliar environments. However, even expatriates with previous overseas experience did not necessarily receive any

cross-cultural training. A lot of times they acquired their new set of skills by actively and passively learning about their host country. In fact, this research suggests that most expatriates did not receive any type of cross-cultural training or the training they received was inadequate.

The literature suggests that cross-cultural training has long been advocated as a means of facilitating effective cross-cultural transfer of expatriates. While international organisations understand and acknowledge that cross-cultural training is important, in many cases they still do not offer any cross-cultural training to their employees. There are many reasons why companies do not offer cross-cultural training. Some believe that it is too costly and time-consuming, or that training is not necessary or effective. In some cases, it was reported that the project management industry is so fast-paced that there is simply no time for cross-cultural training.

## **7.5 Research Limitations and Future Research**

Every research has some limitations; aspects that were not covered in enough detail or were simply not feasible. In the literature review chapter of this thesis, the research referred regularly to Hofstede's findings, even though it could be argued that because Hofstede grouped all Arab countries together the results may not be reliable.

This research also recognises two other limitations. The cross-cultural training of the expatriate's family was not researched in this study and the methods for collecting the data chosen were very time-consuming and elaborate.

### **7.5.1 The Arab World**

The analysis which Geert Hofstede did on the United Arab Emirates is identical to other Arab countries, and Hofstede called them the 'Arab world'. The very term 'Arab world' is questionable, as each of the Arab countries is different to one another and they are unique in their own way. One example of this is the United Arab Emirates. The UAE consists of seven Emirates, and every Emirate is a bit different to the other Emirates. Dubai, for example, is much less conservative than Abu-Dhabi.

The Arab world, then, can best be defined as the region in which people predominantly speak Arabic. Yet throughout what would be considered the Arab world, tens of

thousands of people speak languages other than Arabic, or if they speak the same language, they may not be speaking in the same dialect.

Even geographically the countries that make up the Arab world are quite diverse. They cover a region spanning all of North Africa from the Atlantic coasts of Mauritania and Morocco in the west, well into southwest Asia with Iraq, south into Africa and Sudan, and west into the nations of the Arabian Peninsula. The people living in those different countries are as diverse as their geography and should be studied separately. For example, Pakistan is also part of the 'Arab world', but if it had been studied instead of the UAE the results would have been different.

Nevertheless, it was much easier for Hofstede to group all the countries together and his research is highly regarded and recognised by academics worldwide and it has been used in this thesis. A country-based study on individual Arab countries has not been conducted by Hofstede or any other researcher(s).

### **7.5.2 Cross-cultural Training for the Family**

The role of the spouse is vital, and it is of the highest importance to recognise the role of partners and family members when it comes to expatriate overseas postings. Expatriate assignments affect the whole family, relocating to a foreign and an unfamiliar country is disruptive and hard on each member of the family. This is why considering the family is important when managing international assignments and it is critical they are not neglected. Disregarding the spouse or the family and not providing them with cross-cultural training, help and a support systems will lead the spouse or family to having problems adjusting, which can in turn lead to the expatriate having problems too. Very often, if the family cannot adjust to the new country it is reflected in the expatriate's poor job performance and often if the family or spouse cannot adjust, it leads to a premature return home.

This research did not look at spouse and family cross-cultural training, even though in this Chapter it has been recommended that spouses and families also need to be cross-culturally trained in order to facilitate an easier and less anxious transition. The reasons for not researching the training of spouses and families in more detail is because 61.4 per cent of expatriates do not receive any training at all, so the assumption was made

that if companies do not offer their employees training, they most likely will not offer cross-cultural training to the employee's family. The expatriates that were lucky enough to receive some training reported that the training was insufficient.

Regrettably, for all the listed reasons, this research does not take into account family or spouse cross-cultural training. However, this area of research should not be ignored by corporations. When both the expatriate and his/her family are appropriately trained, and help and support is offered to them, it will reflect positively on the expatriate's job performance and the whole family will have a positive overseas experience.

### **7.5.3 Methods and Limitations**

In terms of the methods used in this thesis, although the survey data was successfully collected, the process was very time-consuming and the researcher spent seven months contacting HR executives in Australia and in the UAE and asking them to distribute the survey link to their Australian expatriate project managers. Additionally, it took seventeen months to collect all the survey data. The survey was structured in such a way that it was anonymous and the researcher was not able to ask any follow-up questions of the respondents.

So, it was decided that case studies should be conducted once the survey data was collected and analysed to obtain more detail on questions that were raised by the survey. The survey gave the researcher a starting point since the survey data clearly defined the issues expatriates struggle with when on an overseas assignments in a culturally diverse country, such as the UAE. However, it was very difficult to find appropriate candidates for the case study interviews. Most project managers were too busy to be able to sit down and be interviewed for a minimum of one hour. In some cases, the interviews that were conducted simply could not be used for this research, because the participants avoided answering the questions or the interviews were too superficial and too short to be used in this research. In the end, the interviews that were analysed in this thesis were in-depth, additionally, in the interviews that were used the participants liked to discuss and describe their experiences in detail. Those interviews went well over one hour. Once the interviews were transcribed and coded, the analysis was carried out. At the analysis stage, the researcher reflected on the replies and noticed that some of the

responses needed to be answered in greater depth, and so follow-up email questions had to be sent out. Fortunately (and surprisingly), the participants responded quickly to the emails and the answers were specific, answering the questions in necessary detail.

The case studies were also very time-consuming to undertake. It took a year to get participants to agree to be interviewed, and to get a meeting with them took usually another few weeks, and then some of the interviews were unsuitable for this research. The case studies proved to be also expensive, with the researcher having to call the UAE and having to drive to the company's head offices in Australia to conduct the interviews.

Nevertheless, enough information was gathered to form the basis for this thesis, since the survey and the case studies had a high response rate and the data collected from both was informative, interesting and in-depth.

This research has been able to address and provide recommendations for companies and their HR departments, so that, if they are willing, they can use the recommendations of this thesis to provide expatriates with appropriate, relevant and up-to-date cross-cultural training.

From an empirical point of view, this research can potentially assist human resource professionals in global organisations to plan and implement more appropriate cross-cultural training courses for Australian expatriates (and others) who are working in the UAE. In addition, the findings of this research could potentially help organisations understand how to help their expatriate project managers to succeed in their overseas roles. In return, this initiative could save the organisations from losing money and other resources, as well as possibly the organisation's and the project manager's reputation. This research has the potential to help the companies and project managers build strong relationships with overseas clients and local businesses in the UAE as well as, government officials. Developing such training programs, in line with the recommendations made in this research, could lead companies to gaining a greater market share in the UAE and being recognised as industry leaders. Investing in people is more likely to give the greatest return.

Whilst this thesis focused on project managers, the findings of this research are relevant and can be applied to any other industry or profession, not only project management.



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